A KING SENT IN LOVE

NO. 2760

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 5, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 14, 1879.

"Then Hiram the king of Tyre answered in writing, which he sent to Solomon, Because the LORD has loved His people, He has made you king over them." 2 Chronicles 2:11.

I THINK that you must have been struck with the deeply religious tone of the communications which passed between Solomon and Hiram. I am inclined to think that Hiram must have been a proselyte to the faith of Israel. At any rate, the dispatches between these two neighboring kings contain very gracious references to Jehovah and His dealings with His ancient people. Not that I recommend that the dispatches which are sent now between kings should be of a similar character, for that would be a piece of beggarly hypocrisy! What has God to do with the most of them? And what has He to do with the transactions of modern times, in which the invasion of countries by the more powerful is perpetually being justified by the laws of politics which seem to be the very reverse of the Laws of God? Oh, that better times might come, when kings would rule in righteousness! One almost despairs of them, but, at any rate, there is a King coming who will rule in righteousness! Make no delays, O our God!

In the letter, which was written by Hiram, we note that he declares his belief that Solomon was of such a character that his reign was a special blessing from God to His people. That is the meaning of our text—"Because the Lord has loved His people, He has made you king over them." Such was the character of Solomon, in those early days before he began to decline from the splendor of his first estate, that even this heathen monarch could see that he was bound to be a blessing to the people. I wish that your life and mine, dear Friends, might always have that about it which should make even the worldling say, "That young man is likely to be a blessing to his family. That woman is sure to be a blessing to her husband and to her children." I would to God that our character was so transparent, so true, pure and good, that all who knew us might feel that we were a blessing to those among whom we dwell!

I want you to notice, also, that Hiram here distinctly recognizes that every blessing comes from God. If Solomon is a blessing to his subjects, Hiram attributes that to the fact of God having placed him where he was. Now, if one who had been a heathen could thus trace a blessing back to God as its source, what heathen must those be who never do anything of the sort, but trace it to what they call, "good luck," or to "chance," or to *anything* rather than to God? O Beloved, whenever there is anything of good, anything of excellence, anything of happiness that comes to our door, let us praise and bless the God who gave it! We are all too apt to complain of Him when we suffer and ready enough to attribute our afflictions to Him. Surely, then, when plentiful mercies come to us, we should magnify and glorify the name of the Lord our God from whom they come! We should say of every mercy, in somewhat similar fashion to that of Hiram when he wrote to Solomon, "Because the Lord has loved His people, therefore has He done this and that for them."

I purpose, however, to take our text right away from Solomon for, true as it was in his case, it is more emphatically true in reference to our King. It is still true, as was said in Thessalonica in Paul's day, "There is another King, one Jesus," and many here present, I am thankful to know, are His loyal subjects. King of kings is He to us and our soul loves to worship and adore Him. Well, now, God has been pleased to make Christ our King, so my text shall run thus—"Because the Lord has loved His people, He has made Jesus to be King over them."

I. That shall be our first division, THE LOVE OF GOD HAS MADE JESUS TO BE OUR KING.

A PORTRAIT NO ARTIST CAN PAINT
NO. 2498

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 3, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 26, 1885.

"He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shines in its strength."
Revelation 1:16.

WHILE reading this description given by John of what he saw in the isle called Patmos, I think you must have noticed that it would be quite impossible for any painter to depict it upon canvas and, equally impossible for any sculptor to embody it in stone or marble. Those who have attempted to copy the lines here given have signally failed—they may paint a picture of the garment down to the feet and the golden girdle—but the rest, if it is viewed from an artist's aspect, would be found to be incongruous. "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes were as a flame of fire." No great painter would ever venture to give us a portrait of our Lord with His head and His hair, "white like wool, as white as snow." If he did, it would be quite impossible to depict eyes that were "as a flame of fire." How would it be possible to make us realize, with the aid of any pen or pencil, that His feet were "like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace"? The task would have to be given over as quite hopeless when it reached this point—"He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shines in its strength."

I believe that this difficulty of giving a truthful representation of the Lord Jesus Christ is according to the Divine purpose. Nothing, it seems to me, can be more detestable to the Lord's heart and mind than the worship of His image in any shape or form. If any are determined to break the Law of God about making graven images and bowing down before them, then let the idol be the image of something that is beneath the earth, or in the water under the earth, but, O, you idolaters, pray do not, as it were, make the Lord Jesus Christ accessory to your idolatry! *That,* He never really can be, for He abhors it! "Get you behind Me, Satan," would be His answer to every proposal that His image should be worshipped, for He could not endure it! It is a dreadful thing that men should ever dare attempt to make any likeness of the Son of God, Himself, to be the occasion of sin. If you must make an image, make it, if you will, of a serpent, or of an ox, but not of the Son of God who came on purpose to redeem us from this, among other sins! Let us not degrade His sacred Personage by making even *it* to be an image before which we prostrate ourselves!

I know it is said that idolaters do not *worship* the image and that they worship God *through* the image, but that is expressly forbidden. The First Commandment is, "You shall have no other gods before Me." Then the Second Commandment forbids the worshipping of God by or through any symbol or image whatever—"You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them." The worship of the image of Christ appears to me to be not the more excusable form of idolatry, if there is any that is less evil than others, but it seems to me to be the more intensely wicked form of it since it is making even the glorious Personage of the Lord Jesus subsidiary to an act of transgression against the Commandments of His Father. If we cannot say concerning the Divine and human Personage of our Lord, "You saw no similitude," yet we can say, "You saw no similitude such as can be engraved in any way whatever."

The fact is that we have, in this apocalyptic vision, very extraordinary hieroglyphics put together. Hieroglyphic language does not aim at the artistic and the poetic—a hieroglyph has a higher objective than the mere gratification of taste. It is intended to give us mental ideas—not ideas for the eyes, but ideas for the *heart*—not what we shall see, but that which we shall feel and understand. Hence, these figurative representations of different parts of our Lord's Person, though they cannot be put together so as to form a picture, are, nevertheless, deeply instructive to every loving and reverent heart.

So I want you, dear Friends, without wishing to make a complete portrait of your Lord, to try to follow the teaching in this verse. There are three things here. First, *the stars in Christ's hand*—"He had in His right hand seven stars." Then, secondly, there is *the sword in His mouth*—"Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." And then, thirdly, there is *the glory of His face*—"His countenance was as the sun shines in its strength."

I. First, then, when John saw our Lord Jesus Christ, he naturally looked to His hands and, therefore, he saw THE STARS IN HIS HAND.

Note, dear Friends, that our Lord Jesus *has a hand*. He is not, as some fancy, an abstract *idea* of a personage without life. He has a hand and that hand is a working hand. The hand that was pierced by the nail is not paralyzed—it has strength to hold in itself seven stars. The hands that worked out our redemption have not ceased to work for us. Christ holds in His hands that which He bought with the blood of His heart. John saw that His Lord held in His right hand seven stars. Let us always think of our Lord Jesus Christ as full of power and actively using it. Let us think of Him at this moment as having a deft, skilled and mighty right hand which He will lift up on the behalf of all those who put their trust in Him. On the right hand of the Majesty on high there sits a right-handed Christ, still carrying on, according to His own good pleasure, the work of the Lord which always prospers in His hand.

When John looked at Christ's right hand, he tells us that in it he saw seven stars. These are generally understood to be the ministers of the seven Churches of Asia. We are told, in the 20th verse, that "the seven

stars are the angels of the seven churches," and I do not know who the angels of the Churches can be unless they are the messengers of the Churches—those ministers of whom Paul wrote—"they are the messengers of the churches and the glory of Christ." At any rate, we shall take it for granted that these stars represent the pastors of the Churches, the ministers of Christ.

These stars are said to be in the Lord's right hand, first, because He *made them stars.* They are in the hand of Him who made them what they are. Under the Old Covenant there were to be, in the Tabernacle, seven lights always burning upon the seven-branched candlestick, or lamp stand. But John saw in *Christ's hand* seven stars—not ordinary lamps, but stars shining with a greater brilliance and a more heavenly light than could ever be seen in the oil-fed lamps in the ancient Tabernacle! If any man in the Church of God shines like a star to guide others to the port of peace, he owes his light entirely to Christ. It must be so, because it is Christ's right hand that has made him what he is—he is a light because Christ has given him light! He owes his spiritual radiance entirely to Him who is the Lord and Giver of light in the midst of His Church. My dear Brothers in the ministry, if you want to shine for Jesus, you must be made into stars to be held in His right hand! There is no possibility of your being of spiritual use to your fellow men, or exercising a ministry that shall tend to their eternal salvation, except as you are made into a light to be held in the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ. All the education in the world, all the natural talent that any possess, all the acquired practice of oratory, all the powers which are the result of long experience can never make a good minister of Jesus Christ! The stars are in the right hand of *Christ*—ministers are not made by men, but by the Lord, Himself, if they are worthy to be called ministers at all. So, the stars are in His right hand, first, because He made them.

They are there, next, dear Friends, because He *holds them up.* Every Christian has to face great perils and every Christian has need to pray to the Lord, "Hold me up, and I shall be safe." But ministers of Christ—ministers whom He makes to be stars—are exposed to sevenfold peril. Against the leaders of the spiritual Israel the sharpest arrows of the enemy are sure to be shot. The command seems to be still passed round to our adversaries as in the ancient day of battle, when the king of Syria said to his captains, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel." If there is a captain anywhere who leads the way and comes to the very front of the host, the temptations that gather about him will be most fierce and terrible. Slander, misrepresentation and every kind of evil shall dog his heels and he, above all men who are on the face of the earth, must cry to his Lord, "Hold me up, and I shall be safe." The mercy is that the true minister of Christ is held up in Christ's right hand. He shall be kept faithful even unto death! He shall not fall and, God helping him, he shall be caused to shine on right to the end of his ministry.

Every now and then we hear a rumor that some of God's own children have fallen from Grace. I do not believe it. It is said that they have fallen away and perished. I do not believe it. Those of you who live till next November and go out late at night may see a great many shooting stars. And some of your little children will cry, "Look, Father, the stars are fal-

ling!" And possibly some children will believe that stars *have* fallen from their places. Take the telescope and look at the heavens—sweep the sky as far as the range of the instrument will permit. Jupiter is all right, and Saturn, and Mars, and Venus, and Mercury, and all the planets—they are all in their places—and the fixed stars are shining on as they have done ever since the Lord first kindled them to charm away the gloom of night! I do not know what these shooting stars may be—there have been many guesses with regard to them. Neither do I know what these apostates may be—there have been a great many guesses about those that did flame out so brightly. But I do know this—Jesus still holds the seven stars in His right hand and He will not drop even *one* of them—they shall not be reduced to six, or five, or four, or three, or two, or one, or vanish altogether—and neither shall it ever be with any of the true sons of God!

Our Lord Himself has said, "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, who gave them to Me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hands." If you, my Brother, are kept in the right hand of Christ, then you *are* kept. If you wish and hope to shine for Jesus through all the years that you shall live, then you *must be held* in His right hand, for He alone, who made you, can hold you up!

Next, are not the stars represented as being in Christ's right hand because *He holds them out* as well as holds them up? As a man holds a lamp in his hand and holds it up and out as far as he can, that its light may shine the farther, so does Christ hold His servants up. Sometimes He holds some of them up high aloft above the multitude, so that, on the Sabbath, they rise quite out of themselves. They say what they could never have *thought* of saying by themselves and they are enabled to plunge into mysteries which before had not been opened up to them. And there are given unto them burning words that shine as well as burn, for their Lord lifts them up and holds them out. Dear Friends, pray much for us who are called to preach the Gospel, that we may always be lifted up in the right hand of Christ! If we try to shine simply with our own natural brightness, it will be a very poor, miserable exhibition of darkness. And if we try to work ourselves up, as some do, into a state of excitement, we may goad ourselves into a condition of semi-madness and lead others into the same folly, but no good will come out of it! That elevation of spirit which comes from the right hand which once was pierced for us—that lifting up of holy speech which is given through contact with the right hand of Him who spoke as never man spoke—that is the kind of uplifting that we need! Pray, Beloved, that every star in the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ may be held up and held out—and so shine yet farther and farther across the wild waste of the waters of sin and sorrow!

Do you not also think that by the stars being in the right hand of Christ, is meant that *He claims them as His own?* Every faithful minister is Christ's property. He belongs to his Lord and he recognizes that blessed fact. "You are not your own, for you are bought with a price," is true of all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is especially true of as many as are called out from among their fellows that they may be the mouth of God—and that God may speak by them to the feeding of His

flock—and to the bringing home of His lost sheep. They are peculiarly and especially in the hand of Christ, for they belong entirely to Christ.

Is not this *the highest honor any man can have,* that he should be in Christ's right hand because he belongs to Christ? You see it is especially mentioned that these stars are not in the *left* hand of Christ, but in His right hand, as if the Lord intended to put peculiar and special honor upon His servants who are faithful to Him. Brothers, it does not become any of us who preach the Gospel to seek honor of men! What is it, after all? What is the value of commendation from the lips of men? Suppose they should praise us and flatter us, and say that we are "thoughtful men," "abreast of the times," and I know not what—all such stuff as this is but carrion, fit for the scavengers of the earth—not worthy to be set before the angels of the Churches! The true servants of Christ may well be satisfied to eat of the crumbs that fall from His table, rather than to feast upon the dainties that load the tables of the ungodly. If our hearts are wholly set on shining for Christ and shining for nothing but Christ, and shining with nothing but Christ's own Light, and the Light of Christ's own Truth, then are we as the stars in His right hand, beloved of Him and precious in His sight! Verily I say unto you there shall be a glorious reward at the last for those who are made by Christ into stars and who are held up, and held out in the right hand of their Lord, and so claimed by Him as peculiarly and especially His own!

So much, then, concerning the ministers of Christ. Brothers and Sisters, pray for us, and pray for all the preachers of the Word, that they may be stars in the right hand of Christ!

II. But now, secondly—and upon this I would dwell with great emphasis. Notice THE SWORD WHICH COMES OUT OF CHRIST'S MOUTH—

"Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword."

The conquering power of the Gospel is in Christ Himself. It does not lie with His ministers. The power with which Christ contends for the mastery against all the powers of darkness resides not with His servants, but dwells within Himself. The two-edged sword of the Lord is in the mouth of the Lord. We shine, dear Friends—such little twinkling stars as any of us are—we shine and God blesses the shining, but if ever there is a soul saved, *we* have not saved it! And if ever there is an enemy of Christ who is wounded and slain, the deed is not done by *our* sword. By ourselves, we have no power—the really effectual work is done by Christ, Himself—and by Him alone. The sword that goes out of our mouth is a poor blunt instrument which can accomplish nothing. It is the sword that goes out of *Christ's* mouth that does everything in the great battle for the right. Notice how the right hand of Christ has to be used, even, to hold up these stars—*ministers* are not His right hand—they are only as stars that He holds up with His right hand! They derive all their power from Him. And even when they are held up by His right hand, they are not the real warriors—it is not their strength with which the battle is fought and won. The power is in Christ, Himself. It is out of His mouth that there goes the sharp two-edged sword that wins the victory.

Notice, dear Friends, that the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to conquer men *is a power which is like a sword.* "The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," comes out of the mouth of Christ, Himself,

and coming out of His mouth, it does several things which I will briefly mention to you.

First, it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This sword pierces "even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow." When I am preaching most earnestly, some of you may find it possible to go to sleep—while I am talking to you about the most sacred things, they may glide over you as oil might run down a slab of marble. But if my Lord speaks to you, you will be compelled to feel the power of this sword that goes out of His mouth! Every Word that comes by His Spirit out of His mouth will seem to rip you open and lay you bare, for, "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do"—and He can make you feel that He is discerning the thoughts and intents of your hearts! The Lord Jesus Christ, when He comes into our midst, brings His fan in His hand and with it He will thoroughly purge His floor. With every movement of that fan and every breath of His Spirit, He is separating the chaff from the wheat. There is no escaping His observation when He is at work among us—private thoughts are detected, the secrets of the heart are laid bare and the precious and the vile are severed, the one from the other, when He is working in the midst of His Church, for out of His mouth goes the Word which is sharper than a two-edged sword.

When this sword comes out of the mouth of Christ, it wounds as well as discerns. As a sword *cuts,* pierces, pricks and wounds, so does the Word of God. I do not wonder that people are sometimes angry with the Word of the Lord. Who would not be angry when he is cut as with a sharp sword? I am not surprised that others retire to weep as if their hearts would break. Who would not weep when the knife cuts into his flesh and touches his very marrow? When the Lord Jesus Christ blesses the Word by His Spirit, the wounded are all around Him. The ungodly begin to tremble and the godly ones, finding that Christ is fighting against the sin that is within them, are wounded and bleeding in a hundred places because of that two-edged sword of His which cuts through coats of mail and wounds, even, to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit!

Out of *Christ's* mouth comes not only a wounding but a *killing* sword. When He speaks with power—and, oh, how I wish that He would do so just now!—sinners feel that their self-righteousness is killed and that all their carnal hopes are killed. They can say—and I trust that some of you can say, with John—"'When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.' I was alive till I saw Christ, I seemed to be all that I wanted to be till I saw Christ. But when I saw Him on the Cross. When I read the mystery of His passion and understood what it cost Him to redeem a soul from death, then I saw what a sinner I must be—and I also saw what would be the result of my sin if *I* had to bear the penalty of it. And then, 'I fell at His feet as dead.'"

Brothers and Sisters, let us pray the Lord Jesus Christ to use that sword which is in His mouth—constantly to use it among us, for what is the use of the seven stars in His right hand—what is the use of *anything* unless Christ's own voice is heard and Christ's own Truth is driven home to the hearts of men? We have a good deal of preaching, nowadays, do we

not? But one Word out of Christ's mouth would be worth fifty thousand out of the mouths of the greatest preachers who have ever lived. Oh, if HE will but speak, though the preacher may be very illiterate and may not have much to say—if God speaks through him, there will be a power about his message which cannot be resisted! On the other hand, the preacher may be one who has been well-trained and taught and he may speak eloquently, so as to please his hearers, but if God does *not* speak through him, what mere froth it is! It is gone like a vapor and no result comes of it. Let us keep on crying that the Master, Himself, may be at work in our midst with the sword of the Spirit, which is the *Word of God,* proceeding out of His mouth!

Did you notice that the text said that *out of Christ's mouth there went a sharp sword?* There is nothing so sharp as God's Word! When we are speaking, it is very seldom that God blesses merely *our* words—it is usually what we quote from the Scripture that is the means of the salvation of our hearers. I think it was McCheyne who said, "It is not our word, but God's Word, which saves souls." I notice that in most conversions, the point of decision has been reached when a text has been quoted. The word which God has blessed has been mainly Scriptural—even if the Truth of God has not been spoken in the exact words of Inspiration—yet it has been most clearly and manifestly a quotation from the Scripture put into other words. There is nothing so sharp as the Word of God! People will get around what we say, but they cannot get around what *God* says. They can ignore your opinion and my view of the case and another person's dictum upon it, but they cannot forget that which comes to them with this message, "Thus says the Lord," or, "It is written." And when the Spirit of God applies the Truth of God to their hearts, it is, indeed, a sharp sword!

It is also *two-edged,* for the text calls it, "a sharp two-edged sword." There is no handling this weapon without cutting yourself, for it has no back to it—it is all edge! The Word of Christ, somehow or other, is all edge. I remember preaching a sermon, on purpose, upon the Resurrection, to see whether God would bless it to the conversion of sinners. There were many brought to Christ by that discourse. With the same intention, I have preached Divine Sovereignty and the Election of Grace—and I have seen many won to Christ by those stern Truths of God. I have often noticed that when I have been preaching for the comfort of God's people, there have always been sinners wounded, even then, for the Word is all edge—and even the consolations of the Gospel, while they cheer the Believer, will cut the sinner in two! There is even something about that which is the sweetest Truth of God to the Believer which is sour to the unbeliever and cuts into his conscience. Only let us preach the Gospel and we shall never find any other weapon like it! As David said of Goliath's sword, so may we say of the sword of the Spirit, "There is none like that, give it to me." When I am invited to preach the novel doctrines of the present age, or to try the modern methods of fighting the devil, I look these new weapons up and down—and I advise those who offer them to me to send them to the Exhibition of Inventions up in the West of London! You may see them there, but you will never see them *here*! The old sword suits my hand and God blesses it to the cutting and the wounding

and the killing of sinners! God the Holy Spirit, who made it, uses it most effectually. So, by the Grace of God, we will keep to it—and use no other as long as we live.

I beg all of you who try to bring sinners to Christ, to stick to that old sword, the two-edged sword that goes out of Christ's mouth! If souls are not saved by the preaching of the Truth of God, they will not be saved by the telling of lies. I have sometimes heard really awful doctrine preached at revival services and an easy-going Brother has said, "Well, you see, it was an evangelistic meeting." Yes, but you should not tell lies at evangelistic meetings! "Oh, but if we were to preach the same Truth of God to these sinners that you would proclaim to a company of Believers, it would not do them any good!" Well, then, nothing else will, depend upon it! If the Truths of God will not have any effect upon them, your toning down of those Truths, or your screwing them up will not improve them, but will spoil them. I believe that the very Gospel that comforts saints is the Gospel that saves sinners—that there is but one Gospel for all purposes and all people and that, therefore, two gospels will never be required! You have only to strike this way with one edge of the sword, and that way with the other edge of it—or to swing it to and fro like that ancient warrior did with his great two-handed sword—and you will strike sinners down right and left, smiting the self-righteous this way, and the licentious the other way! Only keep to that grand old sword which the Apostles used, which was in the martyrs' hands, and by which Christ, Himself, triumphed, *is* triumphing and *will* triumph even to the end!

III. The third part of my subject will have but few words from me and, perhaps, the fewer I shall say, the better it will be. The point to which it refers is THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S FACE—"His countenance was as the sun shines in its strength." I will not attempt to explain these words, but will only call your attention to one or two thoughts concerning them.

First, what do you see in Christ's right hand? Seven stars, yet how insignificant they appear when you get a sight of *His face!* They are stars and there are seven of them—but who can see seven stars, or, for that matter—seventy thousand stars when the sun shines in its strength? How sweet it is, when the Lord, Himself, is so present in a congregation that the preacher, whoever he may be, is altogether forgotten! I pray, dear Friends, when you go to a place of worship, always try to see the Lord's face rather than the stars in His hand! Look at the sun and you will forget the stars. If you look for the stars, it may be that you will see neither star nor sun, for the Lord may withdraw His light from His servants because you are looking to *them* rather than to Him. In Christ's hand are the stars, but His countenance is "as the sun shines in its strength."

What does this mean but that there is about our Divine Lord *an inexpressible, indescribable, infinite splendor? No* man can look at the sun—it would blind him. The sun, when it shines in its strength—not when it is rising in the morning, nor yet when it is setting in the evening, nor yet when a cloud passes over it—but the sun *in its strength*, no man can look at! He would soon lose his eyes if he did. So, who shall ever know, much less tell, the glories of the Lord Jesus Christ? To know Him is our great ambition, but His love surpasses knowledge. That is our confession after

years of endeavoring to search into the height and depth and length and breadth of His love. Think of your Lord, then, as covered with inconceivable Glory.

But this expression is to also be regarded as setting forth Christ's *overpowering pre-eminence.* The best of His servants are only stars, but He is the Sun! In Christ there is more light than there is in all the Prophets, saints and Apostles who have ever lived! All their light came from Him, but all their light was still remaining in Him! And all the light that ever shall be, throughout all the ages, will be as *nothing* compared with the light that there is in Him. One said of Henry the Eighth, that if all the tyrants who ever lived had been dead, they might all have been considered as reproduced in that one man. I may say of our Lord Jesus Christ something very different, that is, if all the *good* things and all the *virtuous* things and all the *loving* things that have ever been since the world began were gone, they are all to be found in Him! As the sun is the great source of light and heat, so there is an overpowering pre-eminence about the Lord Jesus Christ!

Yet, further, this is *a communicable excellence.* The sun, when it shines in its strength, is pouring out its light—the sun has not light merely for itself, but its light is for all the worlds that are round about it, as the face, the glory, the excellence, the merit of Christ is for all His people. He is forever pouring it forth and this is His splendor, that He shines upon the sons of men to fill them with joy.

Yet this figure of the sun has in it something *justly terrible.* Who could fight against the sun that shines in its strength? If all the powers that are contended against the sun and attempted to invade its territory, the sun would consume them all! And who shall fight against You, O Sun of Righteousness? You shall utterly consume them in the day of Your wrath. There will be something terrible about the face of Christ when He comes to judgment—then shall men cry, "Hide us from the face of Him that sits upon the throne." But to His people there is something in His face that is *intensely joyful.* We shall never be in the dark, for our Lord's face is like the sun! Put out all the lamps and let all temporal comfort and all spiritual comfort vanish, yet spare us Christ—give us but to see His face and to be favored with His smile—and we shall need no candle, neither light of any other sun, for the face of Christ "is as the sun that shines in its strength."

Dear Friends, are you on the Lord's side? Are you on Jesus Christ's side? If so, be happy that you have such a Savior! Are you an opponent of His? Then tremble and bow before Him! "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." May He send this choice blessing to you all, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
REVELATION 1

Verses 1, 2. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass. And He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John who bore record of*

the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. John was a most suitable person to see and to bear record of the Word of God, for in his Gospel, (John 19:35), he describes himself at the Cross as both seeing and bearing record. So now that his once-crucified Lord is in His Glory, it seemed right that the same beloved disciple should both see Him and bear record concerning Him. No eyes were so fit to see the Glory of Christ as those which had looked with so much love into the eyes of Jesus of Nazareth in the days of His humiliation. The head that had rested upon his Master's bosom at the Supper Table was prepared, thereby, for all the Glory that should afterwards be revealed. The nearer your communion with Christ is, the more will you be permitted to know of Him. Our perceptions of Christ, if they are true, will be *spiritual*—and in proportion as our spiritual life is in a right condition, shall we be able to know more and more of Him.

3. *Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.* I do not perceive that John says, "Blessed are they that *understand* this Book," for, surely, they would be very few. I do not doubt that there are portions of Scripture which are not meant to be understood as yet—things concerning the future which are wrapped up in a phraseology which will be plain enough when that future arrives—but which, for the present, are not intended so much to gratify our curiosity as to stimulate our watchfulness. To keep us constantly on the lookout is the main objective of every Revelation concerning the future. So far, then, we have the *proem*, or preface, of this great Book of the Revelation.

4, 5. *John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.* John's benediction to the seven Churches of Asia is like that of Paul when he is writing to a Christian Church, "Grace be unto you, and peace." You have probably noticed that when Paul is writing to an *individual minister*, his greeting is, "Grace, *mercy,* and peace," for they who have the solemn charge of souls need "mercy" above all other men! May they find mercy of God in that day! But to the Churches, themselves, it is simply this double benediction, "Grace be unto you, and peace." These blessings, coming in their proper order—Grace, first, and peace afterwards—are very precious. That peace which is not founded upon Grace and does not follow Grace, is a false peace. "Grace be unto you, and peace." But if you have Grace, peace ought to follow—you have a right to it—it is a logical sequence to the possession of the Grace of God. Well does Dr. Watts sing—

"If sin is pardoned, I'm secure;
Death has no sting beside."

If Grace is given, Glory will follow. Therefore, Beloved, "Grace be unto you, and peace." And this Grace and peace must come from the Lord Jesus—"From Him which is, and which was, and which is to come." This Grace and peace must come from the eternal Father, the self-existent Jehovah, and from the ever-blessed Spirit. God alone is the Lord and Giver of Grace and peace! And this double blessing must come from a re-

alization of the Lord Jesus Christ in His glorious Character as "the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." Never forget, dear Friends, that even today Christ is the Prince of the kings of the earth! The Queen reigns, and the Czar reigns—but it is still more true that "The Lord reigns." There is One who is higher than the highest of all earthly kings, even "the Prince of the kings of the earth."

5, 6. *Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.* Do not all of us who truly know our Lord, say that? Do we not wish for Him, Glory and honor beyond anything that we can conceive? May all dominion be His forever and ever, for it is His by right!

7. *Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth shall wail because of Him.* They have crucified Him! All of the earth have, alas, had a share in Christ's death! And dying unforgiven, or being found alive at His coming without repentance, they "*shall* wail because of Him."

7. *Even so, Amen.* Though the wicked shall wail at Christ's appearing, the saints must give consent to the judgments of God as well as to His mercies—"Even so, Amen."

8-12. *I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, says the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. I John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last and, What you see, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me.* This was a very natural thing for John to do. We always feel a desire to see who it is that addresses us and especially would this be the case if we heard such a sentence as this, spoken with a trumpet voice by One who could truly say, "I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last." Who would not have turned to see such a Speaker? I am sure that John would, for he must have recognized that voice, though it was pitched in a higher key than usual, and was full of more sonorous force than when he last heard it. He must have known the voice of the Well-Beloved as He spoke, again, to His highly-favored servant!

12, 13. *And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks One like unto the Son of Man*—It was the very same Son of Man, but John could only say, "like unto the Son of Man"—like unto the One whom he had known long before and whom he had loved with undying affection—like He, but, oh, how unlike He! The Christ in every position is still discernible as "like unto the Son of Man." As John sees Him, with His face shining like the sun in its strength, yet still He is "like unto the Son of Man." In the manger He was like to what He was afterwards upon the Cross. On the Cross He was like to what He

is now upon His Throne—and when He comes again in all His Glory, He will still be like unto what He was and always is—"the Son of Man." "In the midst of the seven candlesticks One like unto the Son of Man"—

13-18. *Clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the chest with a golden band. His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shines in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the First and the Last: I am He that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen. And have the keys of Hell and of death.* That dear familiar touch of Christ's right hand had quickened John into sensibility, again, and brought him back from his swoon when he was lying at Christ's feet as dead. O Master, if we are dead in a worse sense than John was. If we have fallen into a spiritual swoon. If we have come into a fainting fit, lay Your pierced hand upon us, now, and we shall live! Come near us, O Lord, come nearer, nearer, still, and touch Your servants with Your hand of love and power, and we shall be able to hear what You have to say, and our heart shall be strong to obey Your command!

19, 20. *Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks.* Then He proceeds to explain what He meant, just after the manner of the Son of Man who, when He pronounced a parable in public, opened it up to His own disciples in secret, even as He still does. Oh, how blessedly is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever"! His characteristics never change! What He was, He is and that He will ever be, blessed be His holy name."

20. *The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven churches.* The Lord bless to us all the reading of this precious passage from His Word! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—418, 425, 413.

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

CHRISTOPATHY
NO. 2499

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 10, 1897.
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"With His stripes we are healed."
Isaiah 53:5.

Brothers and Sisters, whenever we come to talk about the passion of our Lord—and that subject is clearly brought before us, here, by the two words, "His stripes"—our feelings should be deeply solemn and our attention intensely earnest. Take off your shoes when you draw near to this burning bush, for God is in it! If ever the spirit should be deeply penitential and yet humbly confident, it ought to be when we hear the lash falling upon the Divine and human Person of our blessed Master and see Him wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

Stand still, then, and see your Lord and Master fastened to the Roman column and cruelly scourged! Hear the terrible strokes. Mark the bleeding wounds and see how He becomes a mass of pain even as to His blessed body! Then note how His soul, also, is flagellated. Hark how the whips fall upon His spirit till His inmost heart is wounded with the tortures, all but unbearable, which He endures for us! I charge my own heart to meditate upon this solemn theme without a single wandering thought—and I pray that you and I may be able to think together upon the matchless sufferings of Incarnate Love until our hearts melt within us in grateful love to Him.

Remember, Brothers and Sisters, that we were practically there when Jesus suffered those terrible stripes—

"'Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were!
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear."

We certainly had a share in His sorrows. Oh, that we were equally certain that "with His stripes we are *healed*." You smote Him, dear Friend, and you wounded Him—therefore do not rest until you can say, "with His stripes I am healed." We must have a personal interest in this suffering One if we are to be healed by His stripes. We must lay our own hands upon this great Sacrifice and so accept it as being made on our behalf, for it would be a wretched thing to know that Christ was stricken, but *not* to know that, "with His stripes we are healed." I would to God that no one should go out from this service without being able to say to himself as he retired, "Yes, blessed be His name, 'with His stripes I am healed.' The disease of sin is put away by the sacred balsam which drops from the side of the Crucified. From that mortal disease which otherwise would surely have destroyed me, I am restored by His sufferings, His

grief, His death." And then, all together, may we be able to say, "with His stripes we are healed."

I. Observe, dear Friends, first of all, that GOD HERE TREATS SIN AS A DISEASE.

There would be no need to talk about *healing* if sin had not been regarded by God as a *disease*. It is a great deal more than a disease—it is a willful *crime*—but it is still a disease. It is often very difficult to separate the part in a crime which disease of the mind may have and that portion which is distinctly willful. We need not make this separation ourselves. If we were to do so in order to *excuse* ourselves, that would only be increasing the evil! And if we do it for any other reason, we are so apt to be partial that I am afraid we should ultimately make some kind of excuse for our sin which would not bear the test of the Day of Judgment. It is only because of God's Sovereignty, His Infinite Grace and His strong resolve to have mercy upon men that, in this instance, He wills to look upon sin as a disease. He does not conceal from Himself, or from us, that it is a great and grievous fault. He calls it a trespass, a transgression, iniquity and other terms that set forth its true character. Never in Scripture do we find any excuse for sin, or lessening of its heinousness, but in order that He might have mercy upon us and deal graciously with us, the Lord is pleased to regard it as a disease—and then to come and treat us as a physician treats his patients, that He may cure us of the evil.

Sin is a disease, first, because *it is not an essential part of man as he was created.* It is something abnormal. It was not in human nature at the first. "God made man upright." Our first parent, as he came fresh from the hand of his Maker, was without taint or speck of sin—he had a healthy body inhabited by a healthy soul. There was about him no tendency to evil. He was created pure and perfect—and sin does not enter into the constitution of man, *per se,* as God made it. It is a something which has come into us from outside. Satan came with his temptation and sin entered into us, and death by sin. Therefore, let no man, in any sense whatever, attribute sin to God as the Creator. Let him look upon sin as being a something extraneous to a man, something which ought never to have a *locus standi* within our nature at all, a something that is disturbing and destructive, a poisoned dart that is sticking in our flesh, abiding in our nature—and that has to be extracted by Divine and Sovereign Grace.

And, secondly, sin is like a disease because *it puts all the faculties out of gear* and breaks the equilibrium of the life-forces, just as disease disturbs all our bodily functions. When a man is sick and ill, nothing about him works as it ought to do. There are some particular symptoms which, first of all, betray the existence of the virus of disease, but you cannot injure any one power of the body without the rest being, in their measure, put out of order! Thus has sin come into the soul of man and put him altogether out of gear. Sometimes a certain passion becomes predominant in a person quite out of proportion to the rest of his manhood. Things that might have been right in themselves, grow by indulgence into positive evils, while other things which ought to have had an open existence are suppressed until the suppression becomes a crime. It is sin that

makes us wrong and makes everything about us wrong—and makes us suffer, we know not how much!

The worst of the matter is that we do not, ourselves, readily perceive that we are the evil-doers and we begin, perhaps, to judge others who are right. And because they are not precisely in the same condition as ourselves, we make our sinful selves to be the standard of equity and consider that *they* are wrong, when all the while the evil is in ourselves! As long as a man is under the power of sin, his soul is under the power of a disease which has disturbed all his faculties and taken away the correct action from every part of his being. Hence, God sees sin to be a disease, and we ought to thank Him that, in His gracious condescension, He deals with it in that way, instead of calling it what it really is—a crime deserving instant punishment.

Further, my Friends, sin is a disease because *it weakens the moral energy*, just as many diseases weaken the sick person's body. A man under the influence of some particular disease becomes quite incapacitated for his ordinary work. There was a time when he was strong and athletic, but disease has entered his system and so his nerves have lost their former force and he, who would be the helper of others, becomes impotent and needs to be waited upon, himself. How often is a strong man brought down to utter helplessness! He who used to run like a hare must now be led out if he is to breathe the fresh air of Heaven. He who once could cut with the axe, or pound with the hammer, must now be lifted and carried like a child. You all know how greatly the body is weakened by disease—and just so is it with sin and the spirit. Sin takes away from the soul all power. Does not the Apostle speak of us as being, "without strength" when, "in due time Christ died for the ungodly "? The man has not the power or the will to believe in Christ, but yet he can believe a lie most readily! And he has no difficulty in cheating himself into self-conceit. The man has not the strength to quit his sin, though he has power to pursue it with yet greater energy! He is weak in the knees so that he cannot pray. He is weak in the eyes so that he cannot see Jesus as his Savior. He is weak in the feet so that he cannot draw near to God. He has withered hands, dumb lips, deaf ears and he is palsied in his whole system!

O Sin, you take away from man the strength he needs with which to make the pilgrimage to Heaven, or to go forth to war in the name of the Lord of Hosts! Sin does all this and yet men love it and will not turn from it to Him who alone can destroy its deadly power.

I know that I am speaking to some who are well aware that sin has thrown their whole nature out of order and taken away all their power to do that which is right. You, my Friend, have come into this place, which is like the pool of Bethesda with its five porches, and you have said in your heart, "Oh, that the Great Physician would come and heal me! I cannot step into the pool of His infinite mercy and love, though I would gladly lie there waiting upon the means of Grace. But I know that I shall find no benefit in the means of Grace unless the Lord, who is the Giver of Grace, shall come to me and say, as He said to the man at the pool, 'Rise, take up your bed, and walk.'" Oh, what an awful mass of disease there is all round us in these streets and in these myriads of houses! Sin

has done for mankind the most dreadful deeds—it is the direst of all calamities, the worst of all infections!

And, further, sin is like a disease because it either causes great pain, or *deadens all sensibility*, as the case may be. I do not know which one I might rather choose, whether to be so diseased as to be full of pain, or to be suddenly smitten by a paralytic stroke, so as not to be able to feel at all. In *spiritual* things, the latter is the worse of the two evils! There are some sinners who appear to feel nothing. They sin, but their conscience does not accuse them concerning it. They purpose to go yet further into sin—and they reject Christ and turn aside from Him even when the Spirit of God is striving with them—for they are insensible to the wrong they are doing. They do not feel. They cannot feel. And, alas, they do not even want to feel—they are callous and obdurate and, as the Apostle says—"past feeling." When they read or hear of the Judgment to come, they do not tremble. When they are told about the love of Christ, they do not yield to Him. They can hear about His suffering and remain altogether unmoved—they have no fellowship with His suffering and scarcely know what the expression means! Sin is dear to them, even though it slew the Lord of Glory, Himself! This paralysis, this deadening of the powers is a very terrible phase of the disease of sin.

In some others, sin causes constant misery. I do not mean that godly sorrow which leads to *penitence*, for sin never brings its own repentance, but by way of remorse, or of ungratified desire, or restlessness such as is natural to men who try to fill their immortal spirits with the empty joys of this poor world. Are there not many who, if they had all they have ever wished for, would still wish for more? If they could, at this moment, gratify every desire they have, they would but be as men who drink of the brine of the sea—whose thirst is not thereby quenched, but only increased! Oh, believe me, you will never be content with the pleasures of this world if your mind is at all awakened concerning your state in the sight of God! If you are given over to spiritual paralysis, you may be without feeling, and that is a deadly sign, indeed. But if there is any sort of spiritual life within you, the more you sin the more uneasy you will become. There is no way of peace by plunging more deeply into sin, as some think they will do—drowning dull care in the flowing bowl, or endeavoring to show their hardihood by rushing into still viler forms of lust in order that they may, somehow or other, be satisfied and content. No, this disease breeds a hunger which increases as you feed it! It engenders a thirst which becomes the more intense the more you try to satisfy it!

Sin is also like a disease because *it frequently produces a manifest pollution.* All disease in the body pollutes it in some way or other. Turn the microscope upon the affected part and you will soon discover that there is something obnoxious there! But sin in the soul pollutes terribly in the sight of God. There are quiet, respectable sins which men can conceal from their fellow creatures so that they can keep their place in society and seem to be all that they ought to be. But there are other sins which, like the leprosy of old, are white upon their brows! There are sins that are to be seen in the outward appearance of the man—his speech betrays him—his walk and conversation indicate what is going on within his heart. It is a dreadful thing for the sinner to remember that he is a pol-

luted being—until he is washed in Christ's precious blood, he is a being with whom God can have no sort of communion! Men have to put infected persons away from the society of other people. Under the Jewish Law, when men were in a certain stage of disease, they had to be isolated altogether from their fellow men and certainly could not come into the House of the Lord. O my Hearers, there are some of you, who, if your bodies were as diseased as your souls are, would not dare to show your faces in the streets! And some of us who have been washed in the blood of Jesus have felt ourselves to be so foul, so vile, so filthy, that if we could have ceased to exist, we would have welcomed annihilation as a gift!

I remember the time when, under a sense of sin, I was afraid to pray. I did groan out a prayer of a sort, but I felt as if the very earth must be weary of bearing up such a sinner—and that the stars in their courses must be anxious to shoot ominous fires upon the one who was so defiled! Perhaps some of you have felt as I did and now you join me in saying, "But we are washed! But we are sanctified! But we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God!" The disease that was upon us was worse than the foulest leprosy, more infectious than the most terrible fever—causing greater deformity than the dropsy and working in us worse ills than the most foul disease that can ever fall upon the bodies of men! I would to God that men did but see that although the picture I have tried to draw is terrible, indeed, yet it is most gracious *on God's part* to treat them as diseased persons needing to be cured, rather than as criminals waiting to be executed!

Once more, sin is like disease because *it tends to increase in the man and will, one day, prove fatal to him.* You cannot say to a disease, "To here shall you come, but no further." There are some diseases that seem to come very gradually, but they come very surely. There is the hectic flush, the trying cough, the painful breathing—and we begin to feel that consumption is coming. And very soon—terribly soon to those who love them—those who were once hale and hearty, to all appearance, become like walking skeletons, for the fell disease has laid its cruel hand upon them and will not let them go. So, my Friend, as long as sin is in you, you need not deceive yourself and think you can get rid of it when you will, for you cannot. It must be driven out by a higher Power than your own—this disease must be cured by the Great Physician or else it will keep on increasing until, at last, you die! Sin will grow upon you till, "when it is finished, it brings forth death." God grant that before that awful ending is reached, the Lord Jesus Christ may come and cure you, so that you may be able to say, "With His stripes we are healed."

Sin is a contagious disease which passes from one to another. It is hereditary. It is universal. It is incurable. It is a mortal malady. It is a disease which no human physician can heal. Death, which ends all bodily pain, cannot cure this disease—it displays its utmost power in *eternity*, after the seal of perpetuity has been set upon it by the mandate—"He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." It is, in fact, such a disease that you were born with it and you will bear it with you forever and ever, unless this wondrous prescription, of which we are now to speak, shall be ac-

cepted by you and shall work in you the Divine good pleasure, so that you shall be able to say, "With His stripes we are healed."

II. Now, secondly, we see from our text that GOD HERE DECLARES THE REMEDY WHICH HE HAS PROVIDED. Jesus Christ, His dear Son, has taken upon Himself our nature and suffered on the Cross in our place—and God the Father has delivered Him up for us all—that we might be able to say, "With His stripes we are healed."

First, dear Friends, *behold the heavenly medicine*—the stripes of Jesus in body and in soul! Picture Him before your mind's eyes. He is scourged by the rough Roman soldiers till the sacred stream rolls down His back in a crimson tide. And He is scourged within as well as outside till He cries, in utmost agony, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He is fastened to the cruel Cross—His hands and feet and brow are all bleeding and His inmost soul is poured out even unto death—whatever that wonderful expression may mean. He bears the sin of many, the chastisement of their peace is upon Him. He is bruised for their iniquities and wounded for their transgressions. If you would be healed of sin's sickness, here is the Medicine! Is it not amazing surgery? Surgeons usually give us pain while trying to cure us, but here is a Physician who bears the pain, Himself, and thereby heals us! Here is no medicine for us to take, for it has all been taken by Him! He suffers, He groans, He dies—and it is by His grief and agonies that we are healed!

Then, next, *remember that the sufferings of Christ were vicarious.* He stood in our place that we might stand in His place. He took our sin upon Himself and, being found with that sin upon Him, He was made to bear the penalty that was due to it. And He did bear it—and this is the way whereby we are healed—by Jesus Christ, Himself, taking our infirmities and bearing our sicknesses. This Doctrine of Substitution is the grandest of all Truths of God and though all these years I have continued to preach nothing else but this, what better news can I tell a poor sinner than that the Savior has taken his sins and borne his sorrows for him? Take away the Doctrine of the Substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ and you have torn out the very heart of the Gospel! "The blood is the life thereof" and you have no living Gospel to preach if Atonement by blood is once put into the background! But, O poor Soul, if you believe that Jesus is the Christ and that Christ took your sins and bore them in His own body on the tree where He died, "the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God," you are saved, and saved forever!

This is how it is that "with His stripes we are healed." *Accept this Atonement and you are saved by it.* Does someone enquire, "How am I to get this Atonement applied to my soul?" Well, first, the patient shows his wounds and exhibits the progress of the disease. Then, prayer begs for the Divine surgery. Next, belief in Christ is the linen cloth which binds on the plaster. If you believe on Jesus Christ—if you will accept the testimony of God concerning His Son whom He has set forth to be the Propitiation for sin—and rely upon Him, alone, for salvation, you shall be saved! Faith, that is, *trust*, is the hand that brings the plaster to the wound and holds it there till the blessed balsam has destroyed the venom that is within us. Trust yourself with Him who died for you, and you are saved! And, continuing to trust Him, you shall daily feel the

power of His expiation, the marvelous healing that comes by His stripes! Repentance is the first symptom of that healing. When the proud flesh begins to yield. When the wretched gathering commences to break and the soul that was formerly swollen through trying to conceal its sin bursts with confession and acknowledgment of its transgression, then is it being healed by the stripes of Jesus! This is God's wondrous remedy for the soul-sickness of sin!

But let me beg you to notice that *you must let nothing of your own interfere with this Divine remedy*—"With His stripes we are healed." You see where prayer comes in—*it* does not heal, but it asks for the remedy. You see where trust comes in—it is not trust that heals—that is man's application of the great remedy. You see where repentance comes in—that is not what cures, it is a part of the cure, one of the first tokens that the blessed medicine has begun to work in the soul. "With *His stripes* we are healed." Will you notice that fact? The healing of a sinner does not lie in himself, nor in what he is, nor in what he feels, nor in what he does, nor in what he vows, nor in what he promises. It is not in himself at all, but there, at Gabbatha, where the pavement is stained with the blood of the Son of God, and there, at Golgotha, where the place of a skull beholds the agonies of Christ. It is in His stripes that the healing lies! I beseech you, do not scourge yourself—"With *His* stripes we are healed." I beg you, do not think that by some kind of spiritual mortification, or terror, or horror, into which you are to force yourself, you shall be healed—your healing is in *His* stripes, not in your own! In His grief, not in your grief. Come to Christ and even if you are tempted to trust in your repentance, I implore you, do not make your repentance a rival of the stripes of Jesus, for so it would become an antichrist!

When your eyes are full of tears, look through them to Christ on the Cross, for it is not wet eyes that will save you, but the Christ whom you may see, whether your eyes are wet or dry. In the Christ upon the Cross there are five wounds, but you have not to add even another one of your own to them! In Him and in Him, alone, is all your healing! In Him who, from head to foot, becomes a mass of suffering, that you, diseased from head to foot, might, from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet be made perfectly whole!

III. Now I must close with the third reflection, which is this—THE DIVINE REMEDY IS IMMEDIATELY EFFECTIVE. "With His stripes we are healed."

To the carnal mind it does not seem as if the sufferings of Christ could touch the case at all, but those who have believed in the stripes of Jesus are witnesses to the instant and perfect efficacy of the medicine. We can, many of us, speak from experience, since we can say that "we are healed." HOW are we healed?

Well, first, *our conscience is healed of every smart.* God is satisfied with Christ and so are we. If, for Christ's sake, He has put away sin without dishonor to Himself, then are we, also, perfectly content and full of rejoicing in the Atonement and we need nothing else to keep our conscience quiet.

By these same wounds of Christ *our heart is healed of its love of sin.* It was once in love with sin, but now it hates all iniquity. If our Redeemer

died because of our sin, how can we live any longer therein? All our past thoughts concerning sin are turned upside down or reversed. Sin once gave us pleasure, but now it gives us the utmost pain and we desire to be free from it, and to be perfectly holy—there is no evil that we would harbor in our bosoms. It did seem an amazing thing that we should look to Christ and so find pardon and that at that same moment we should be totally changed in our nature as to our view of sin, yet it did so happen! While sin was on us, we felt as if we had no hope and, therefore, we went on in sin. But when sin was pardoned, then we felt great joy and, consequently, gratitude and love to God. A sinner repents of his sins much more after they are pardoned than he does before, and so he sings—

"I know they are forgiven,
But still their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on Thee."

Our cry is, "Death to sin, now that Christ has died for sin!" "If the One died for all, then the all died" and, as in Christ we died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein? You may preach mere morality till there shall be no morality left—but preach the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ and the pardoning love of the Father—and then the immoral will be changed and follow after holiness with a greater eagerness than ever possessed them while they followed after sin!

By this Divine remedy *our life is healed of its rebellion.* This medicine has worked within the heart and it has also worked outside in the life. Now has the drunk become sober and he hates the cup he used to love. Now has the swearer's foul mouth been washed and his lips, once so polluted, are like lilies dropping sweet, smelling myrrh. Now has the cruel and unkind one become tender, gentle and loving—the false has become true, the proud bends his neck in humility, the idle has become a diligent servant of Christ! The transformation is wonderful and this is the secret, "With His stripes we are healed."

Yet again, *our consciousness assures us that we are healed.* We know that we are healed and we rejoice in the fact—and we are not to be argued out of it. There seems to be a theory, held by some people, to the effect that we cannot tell whether we are saved or not. When we have had a disease in our body, we can tell whether we have been healed or not, and the marks and evidences of the supernatural change that takes place within the spirit are as apparent, as a usual rule, and certainly as positive and sure as the changes worked in the body by healing medicine! We know that we are healed. I am not talking to you of a thing which I do not know *personally* for myself. When the text says, *"We,"* my heart says, "I," and I am longing that everybody here should be able to put his own seal to it and say, "That is true! With His stripes we are healed! With His stripes we are healed! With His stripes we *are* healed!" I will not go into the stories of some who are here—stories that I know of the marvelous change that Grace has made in your characters and lives—but you can bear witness, as can all the saints in Heaven, that, "with His stripes we are healed."

My last word is, if you are healed by His stripes, you should go and live like healthy men. When a man is healed of disease, he does not con-

tinue to lie in bed! So, dear Friends, do not any of you be lazy Christians! When a man is healed, he does not sit down and groan about the disease that is gone. So do not any of you be continually groaning and croaking and sighing. When a man is healed, he likes to go and tell about the remedy to others. So, dear Friends, do not keep to yourselves the news of this blessed heavenly balsam, but go and tell the tidings everywhere, "With His stripes we are healed." When a man is healed, he is joyful and begins to sing with gladness. So, go and sing, and praise and bless the Lord all your days!

When Christ heals, you know, people do not get the sickness again. His cures are cures for life—and cures for eternity! If the devil goes out of a man of his own accord, he always comes back and brings seven others with him. But if Christ turns him out, I guarantee you that he will never be allowed to come back! When the strong Man armed has dislodged the devil, He keeps the house that He has won and takes good care that neither by the front door nor by the back, shall the old enemy ever come back again! Having by His own right hand and His holy arm gotten the victory, He challenges the foeman to take back his spoil, crying, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?" No, that shall never be! So you may go on your way rejoicing and sing as you go, "With His stripes we are healed."

This is not a temporary remedy—it is a medicine which, when it once gets into the soul, breeds therein health that shall make that soul perfectly whole, so that at last, among the holy ones before the Throne of God on high, that man shall sing with all his fellows—"With His stripes we are healed." Glory be to the bleeding Christ! All honor, majesty, dominion and praise be unto Him forever and ever!" And let all the healed ones say, "Amen, and Amen."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *ISAIAH 53.*

We will read, this evening, the 53rd Chapter of "the Gospel according to Isaiah," as we may very properly call it.

Verse 1. *Who has believed our report?* All the Prophets reported that which had been revealed to them concerning Christ. They testified what they knew with regard to Jesus of Nazareth, the suffering Savior. Yet how few, comparatively, of the Jewish people—how few, indeed, of *any* people, compared with the great mass of mankind—accepted their testimony and believed their report? No blessing can come through that report if it is not believed. And this is the sorrow of the Lord's servants in every age—that so many refuse to believe it. "Who has believed our report?"

1. *And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?* For God's power both produces and accompanies faith. No man believes in Christ except as the arm of the Lord is revealed, or made bare, so as to work faith in him. This is the great grief of God's ministers, today, that so often we have to go back to our homes and cry, "Who has believed our report?" It is not a doubtful report, it is not an incredible message, it is not a matter of indifference to our Hearers. It is an all-important declaration—the accuracy of which is guaranteed by the God of Truth—yet who has believed it? Oh,

that the arm of the Lord were made bare in the hearts of multitudes of men! What was the reason of this unbelief in the case of the Jews to whom the Prophet spoke, and of those to whom the Messiah, afterwards, came? It was the lowly estate of Christ that caused them to stumble! They asked, in contempt, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" They looked for external pomp and martial prowess, so they could not perceive the internal beauty and majestic holiness of the Lord Jesus.

2. *For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.* Christ has both form and comeliness to the *spiritual* eye. But to the carnal, He seems only like ordinary men, except that His visage is more marred than that of other men and His form than that of any of the sons of men. "He has no form nor comeliness." The ungodly look for something that can excite their admiration, or create mirth for them, but they see nothing of this in the Christ of God. But little can we blame them, for, not very long ago, many of us were, ourselves, just as blind as they now are! Do you not feel, Beloved, that you can smite upon your breasts with deepest regret for the length of time in which you were blind to the beauties of your Redeemer? Alas, that the Prophet's words were always true of us, "When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him."

3. *He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not.* It was not only Christ's humiliation, but His sorrow which became a stumbling-block in the way of the unbelieving Jews. How could they, who were looking for an earthly deliverer to come in regal splendor, believe in a weeping Messiah? How could they delight in Him from whom men hid their faces when they were expecting a mighty leader before whom all would submit themselves? Ah, Friends, there was a time when we did not esteem the Lord, when we despised Him! We also cared not for the Man of Sorrows! Though all His sorrows were borne on our account, we passed Him by with utter indifference. O wretched Heart! Well might I wish to tear you from my bosom as I think that you should have been callous to your Lord, the Well-Beloved! It was a death, indeed, which you did call life, when you did live without your Lord—"We hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not."

4. *Surely He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows.* What a discovery this Truth of God seems to be! How it bursts upon the Prophet and his hearers and amazes them! "Surely," they say, "can it be really so, that, 'He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows'?" Yes, it is indeed so. There is no accounting for the sufferings of the perfect Christ except by this explanation—that He was bearing our grief and carrying the sorrows that we ought to have carried for our own sin.

4, 5. *Yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But 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.* If this does not teach the Doctrine of a vicarious *Atonement,* what does it teach? If Christ's sufferings were not endured in our place, what do these words mean?

6. *All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way.* All sinning, but each one sinning in his own particular fashion. It is well to acknowledge the common guilt of all men, but it is the token of true repentance that it dwells mainly on its own special offense. Brothers and Sisters, we have no occasion to find fault with one another, for, "all we, like sheep, have gone astray." But we have great reason for each of us to find special fault with ourselves, for, "*we* have turned, everyone, to his own way."

6. *And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.* What a mercy it is that every sort of sin—the sin of the mass, and the sin of the particular sinner—has been laid by Jehovah, Himself, upon His only-begotten Son! "Jehovah has made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all." Mark you, not merely, "the chastisement" of which the previous verse spoke, but "the *iniquity,*" itself! And, albeit there are some who say that this cannot be—and that iniquity cannot be shifted from one person to another—it has been done! And there is an end of it.

7. *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth.* The sin laid upon Him was none of His and He might have repudiated it, but He did not. And even when the bitter result of sin came to Him and, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth."

7. *He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.* O Friends, what infinite patience is here—patience which endured woes unknown to us, for our Lord's grief and agonies were deeper than we shall ever be able to fathom! Yet to the end He bore all without a struggle. I went to see a friend, the other day, who has had a great number of sore afflictions, yet I found her singularly cheerful and content. And when I was speaking with her about the matter, she said, "I have for years enjoyed perfect submission to the Divine will, and it was through what I heard you say." So I asked her, "What did I say?" She replied, "Why, you told us that you had seen a sheep that was in the hands of the shearers and, that although all the wool was clipped off its back, the shears never cut into its flesh. And you said that the reason was because the sheep was lying perfectly still. You said, 'Lie still, and the shears will not cut you. But if you kick and struggle, you will not only be shorn, for God has resolved to do that, but you will be wounded in the bargain.'" O Beloved, it is a blessed thing to lie still under the shears, so still as not even to bleat! "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." May the perfect example of the Lamb of God teach us a holy submissiveness to the will of God!

8. *He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation?* Are there none to speak up for Christ, none to bear testimony to the purity of His life and the sinlessness of His Character?

8. *For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken.* Oh, dwell on that great Truth of God! The Doctrine of Christ's Substitution for His people is the brightest star in the galaxy of Revelation! No more cheering light ever falls upon a tearful eye than this, "for the transgression of My people was He stricken."

9. *And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.* He died and was buried because He had done no violence. Most men who have perished by judicial sentence have had to die because they *have done violence* and because deceit was in their mouth. But here is One who is found guilty of nothing but excess of *love*—loving sinners so much that He must give His life sooner than that they should perish!

10. *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hands.* Death, in our Lord's case, was the way to the extension of life. He dies that He may see His seed, as He, Himself, said to His disciples, "Except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit." For Christ, the path to prosperity was by way of adversity. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands because it pleased the Father to bruise Him. And, oftentimes, it shall be with the servant as it was with the Master—it shall please the Lord to bruise you and put you to grief, that in later days the pleasure of the Lord may prosper in your hands.

11. *He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.* This is a clear proof that He shall live and He shall triumph. All His grief shall come to an end and even the death pangs of His soul shall be the travail by which multitudes shall be born unto Him, so that His infinite heart shall be satisfied.

11. *By His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many.* By their knowledge of Him, by their so knowing Him as to trust Him, they shall find justification, and "many" shall find it.

11. *For He shall bear their iniquities.* We are told that the Doctrine of Substitution is a theory by which we explain the fact of Christ's death, but that it is only a theory. It is not so, for it is of the very *essence* of the fact! It is by no means our explanation—it is God's own declaration! "He shall bear their iniquities."

12. *Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great.* That is His Father's gift.

12. *And He shall divide the spoil with the strong.* That is the result of His own conquest.

12. *Because He has poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* Forever blessed be His dear name! Amen.

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

NUMBER 2500—OR, "ENTRANCE AND EXCLUSION"
NO. 2500

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"And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut."
Matthew 25:10.

DURING the waiting period, the wise and foolish virgins seemed much alike, even as at this day one can hardly discern the false professor from the true. Everything turned upon the coming of the bridegroom. To the 10 virgins, that was the chief event of the night. If it had not been for his coming, they would not have gone forth with their lamps. It was because they knew he would surely come that they prepared themselves to join in the marriage procession and attend him with their songs to the place of his abode. Yet, for a while, he did not come. The sun had gone down and darkness had stolen over the whole landscape, but the bridegroom did not come. The dews of night were falling fast, yet still he did not come. The hours were long and slowly passed away, one after the other, yet he did not come. It was waxing toward the middle of the night—a few stars were visible, but there was no lingering light of the day remaining. It was the time of darkness and the eyes of the waiting virgins grew heavy with watching. Why was the bridegroom so long in coming? They had been told to look for him. They had fully expected him, yet he had not come. There were whispers that it was all a delusion and that he would *never* come. And there was that guilty sense of slumber which stole over them. In the case of some of the 10, their spirit was willing, but their flesh was weak. But in the case of the others, both flesh and spirit were perverse, so that their sleep became exceedingly deep, as when a man sleeps even unto death.

But the bridegroom did come, as, Brothers and Sisters, in our case the Heavenly Bridegroom will come! However long we may have waited for Him, let us rest assured that He will come. As surely as He came once, so, "unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." It seems to me that it needs less faith to believe in the Second Advent of Christ than in His First Advent. He has been here before, so He knows the way to come again. He has been here before and worked a wondrous work—surely He will come back to receive the reward of His service. The Good Shepherd came to earth once to lay down His life for the sheep—He will surely come again as the Chief Shepherd to recompense the under-shepherds who have faithfully kept

the night watches for Him. Jesus will come again, as surely as the bridegroom came at the midnight hour!

Yes, the bridegroom did come. Despite the waiting time, he did come, and then came the dreadful separation between those who had been waiting for his appearing. Scarcely by any act of his, the foolish and the wise were parted, the one from the other. They were awakened by the sound of his approach—the herald that preceded him cried, "Behold, the bridegroom comes," and the sleepers were all aroused. Then the true adherents of the bridegroom, the wise virgins, penitent for their guilty sleep, poured the oil into their lamps, which were burning low, and soon they were blazing up clear and bright. As the bridegroom's procession came near, "they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut." But the foolish virgins—those who had despised the secret stores of oil—those who had never gone to the Divine Spirit for His matchless Grace—were separated from their wiser companions. Not, indeed, by any special act of the bridegroom, but as the natural result of their own unprepared condition. They had to go away to buy oil from those who sold it. And when they came back, it was too late for them to go in to the marriage. They came up to the gate of the palace and found the door fast closed against them—shut forever—and learned that they must abide in the outer darkness, to weep and lament that they were not found worthy to behold the bridegroom's face, or to enter into his joy.

I am going to talk to you, dear Friends, as simply as I can, but with deep soul-earnestness, about the two sets of persons mentioned in the text. First, I will speak of *the ready and their entrance—"They* that were ready went in with him to the marriage." And, secondly, I will say something about *the unready and their exclusion—* "And the door was shut."

I. First, then, let us think of THE READY AND THEIR ENTRANCE—"They that were ready went in with him to the marriage."

Let us meditate a little, first, about the entrance, itself, and then talk together about the persons who enjoyed it.

Concerning their entrance, note that it was *immediate upon the coming of the bridegroom.* As soon as he appeared there seems to have been no interval, but, at once, "they that were *ready went in* with him to the marriage." Beloved Friends, the manifestation of Christ shall be the glorification of His people! We shall need nothing else but to behold His face and then our bliss shall be perfect and complete. So each Believer says with 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." Never entertain the slightest fear of any such purgatorial state as some have begun to dream of again! That lie, which the Reformers rightly called, "purgatory pick-purse," which filled the pope's treasury and was a curse to myriads of immortal souls, was exposed in all its naked ugliness by the Light which God gave to Luther and Calvin. Yet now, amid the abounding skepticism of these evil days, there is coming back this foul night-bird, or rather, this dragon of the Dark Ages—and sometimes even the children of God feel the influence of its pestilential presence.

Dear Christian friends, be not afraid of any purgatory! If you die, you shall be absent from the body and present with the Lord at once, for this shall be your blessed portion in Christ! If you are alive and remain till Jesus comes again, your body shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and you shall rise to meet your Lord in the air and so shall be forever with Him. But if you have fallen asleep in Jesus, those who are alive at His coming shall have no preference over you, but you shall be raised incorruptible—and in the moment of that rising, when your spirit, by the Divine fiat, shall have been reunited with your perfectly purified and glorified body—you shall go in with Him to the marriage and be forever with Him and like He is! Do not trouble yourself, therefore, about what is to happen, or what is not to happen. Be confident of this—if you sleep, you shall sleep in Jesus—and when you wake up, you shall wake up in His likeness and you shall never be parted from Him whose company, even now, is your highest source of joy, and whose society shall be your delight forever and ever!

Notice, next, that the entrance of the wise virgins into the marriage feast was not only immediate, it was also *intimate.* "They that were ready went in *with him* to the marriage." I like that expression, "with him." I would go nowhere without Him and, if I may go anywhere with Him, wherever He shall lead me, it shall be a happy day to me! And so it shall be to all who love His appearing. You know, Beloved, that our Lord Jesus left it in His will that we are to be with Him in His Glory. Listen to this clause out of His last will and testament—"Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory." O Beloved, you who know what it is to be one with Jesus, crucified with Him, risen with Him, made to sit together with Him in the heavenlies, you, I am sure, will find something more heavenly about Heaven than otherwise had been there when that sweet sentence is true of you, "They that were ready went in *with him* to the marriage." Our Lord Jesus, Himself, shall escort us to our place in Glory! He shall conduct us to the sources of highest blessedness, for as the elder said to John in the Revelation, *"The* Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters."

This, it seems to me, is the very center of the bliss of Heaven. Heaven is like the Eshcol cluster of grapes, but the essence, the juice, the sweetness of the cluster, consists in this fact—that we shall be with Jesus—"forever with the Lord." Ah, me! My Brothers and Sisters, how else could we ever hope to go in to the marriage if we did not go in with Him—hidden behind Him, covered with His righteousness, washed in His blood? John saw a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the Throne of God, and before the Lamb—and it was of them that the elder also said, "These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the Throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His Temple: and He that sits on the Throne shall dwell among them."

No one will object to the entrance into Glory of those who go in with Him! Even the pure and holy God will not raise any question as to our entrance if we enter with His Son! All the demands of Divine Justice will be fully met by the fact that we go in with Him. Covered with His righteousness, adorned with His beauties, inseparably united to His Person, the beloved of His heart, we shall go in with Him to the marriage and none will think of needing to have us excluded.

I am tempted to linger over such a delightful theme as this, but I must not, and I need not, for you can meditate upon it to your heart's content when you are at home. To my mind there is indescribable sweetness in these words—"They that were ready went in *with him* to the marriage."

Then, next, notice how *exceedingly joyous* was the entrance. "They that were ready went in with him *to the marriage."* It was not their portion to stand outside the door, to listen to the music and enjoy the light that might come streaming through when it was opened for a few seconds—they "went in with him to the marriage." It was not the intention of our Lord to tell us in this parable in what capacity the saints shall enter Heaven. The parable is meant to teach certain lessons and it explains them very clearly. If it tried to teach us everything, we might miss the most important lesson of all. But from other passages of Scripture we know that we shall go in with Christ to the marriage, not as mere spectators of His joy, as friends of the Bridegroom who rejoice exceedingly in His gladness, but we shall go in with Him to share His bliss. Be it always remembered that sinners though we are, and utterly unworthy of so distinguished an honor, the Lord Jesus says to every believing soul, "I have espoused you unto Myself, to be Mine forever and ever." Oh, matchless words! You, Believer, shall go in with Him to that heavenly marriage feast, as part of that wondrous bride, the Lamb's wife, who is then to find her bliss forever consummated with her glorious Husband!

What a mercy it is to have Grace enough to be able to believe this, for it needs much faith to believe that such a distinction shall ever be the lot of those who were once heirs of wrath even as others and who, by their sins have deserved to be cast into the deepest Hell! Yet, Beloved, there are no heights in Heaven which we shall not climb. There are no joys before the Throne of God of which we shall not be partakers! We shall not be present at that wedding feast merely as Christ's servants, or as onlookers, or as favored guests—we shall be there to partake to the fullest of all the bliss and Glory, ourselves—all the while the object of that innermost love, that most special, most dear and near and intimate communion with our Beloved! We shall forever be one with Christ by conjugal bands. No, more than that, for even conjugal bands are only used as a humble metaphor of the eternal union between our souls and Christ. "This," said the Apostle Paul, when referring to marriage, *"is* a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." *"They* that were ready went in with him to the marriage," right up to the banqueting table, to partake of all the rare dainties gathered from all the ages, brought from all the dominions of the great King, to make high festival for that greatest of all days for which all other days were made, the Day of Judgment, itself, included!

Even on earth we always properly associate the highest degree of joy with a marriage when it is what it ought to be. If ever there is any joy on earth that belongs naturally to us as beings of flesh and blood, it is upon our marriage day. The wedding of a loving couple is looked forward to with great expectations and often looked back upon with fond memories. However much of blight and withering blast may, in later life, fall upon that relationship which is commenced upon the marriage day, yet the day, itself, is always the figure and emblem of joy. See, then, what Heaven is to be to the people of God—it is a marriage, a perpetual festival, a banishment of everything that is dolorous, a gathering together of all that is joyous. A marriage on earth—well, we know what that is, but a marriage in *Heaven*—who can describe that? The marriage of men and women—we are familiar enough with that, but this union of which I am trying to speak is the marriage of the Christ of God with His redeemed people! Earthly marriage is contracted between two sinners, but this heavenly wedding is the marriage of One who is all pure and holy, to another whom He has purified from every stain, or spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing—and so made ready for this everlasting union!

"They that were ready went in with him to the marriage." These words sound to my ears and heart like the pealing of wedding bells. Listen! These people had been in the battle, fighting as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, but, by-and-by, they "went in with Him to the marriage." They had been in their Lord's vineyard, toiling amid the burden and heat of the day—the sun had looked upon them and they were bronzed and browned with the burning heat. But in due time they "went in with him to the marriage." They had sometimes seen their Lord for a season and then they had missed Him for a while, but they "went in with Him to the marriage." They had even wandered from Him, sometimes, and darkness had surrounded them. Yes, and they had wickedly fallen asleep when they ought to have watched—but they "went in with Him to the marriage." Oh, the *blessedness* of being where all evil is forever ended and all joy is begun, never to end—all sin and imperfection blotted out by *Christ's* precious blood—and all holiness and perfection put upon us forever and ever! All this and more I read in the words, *"They* that were ready went in with him to the marriage."

Then comes this little sentence which is so terrible to the ungodly, but, oh, so sweet to the gracious—"And the door was shut." These words show that the entrance of the righteous into Heaven is *eternal.* The door was shut for two purposes, but chiefly, as I understand it, to *shut in* the godly. And before that door can be opened to let in the wicked, it will have to be opened to let out the righteous. These two declarations of our Lord stand side by side—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." If you deny the eternity of the one, you must deny the eternity of the other, for it is the same word in each case! You must break down the door which is the security of the saints within, before there can be a change for the ungodly who are outside—and that can never be! The joy of this marriage feast is eternal joy! This is implied in our Savior's utterance, "They that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut."

I want you, next, to notice who these people were who went in with the Bridegroom. According to the text they were a *prepared people,* a people that were ready—"They that were ready went in with him to the marriage." There are none among the sons of men who are naturally ready to go in to that marriage feast. Before they can enter, they must undergo a wondrous change. They must, in fact, be born again! Think for a moment what creatures we are by nature, quite unfit to go in with Christ to the heavenly marriage. Then think of what Christ is, so bright, so pure, so holy—who is she who is fit to go into Heaven, to be forever with this glorious Bridegroom? O my Soul, you are but dust and ashes, and your Lord is the Sun of Righteousness! O my Soul, you are, through sin, comparable to a dunghill! And your Savior is Infinite Perfection. Can you ever be "ready" to go in with Him to the marriage? Not unless that same God who became Man that He might be a fit Husband for you, shall *make* you holy, that you may be meet to be wedded to Him forever!

A great change has to be worked in you, far beyond any power of yours to accomplish, before you can go in with Christ to the marriage! You must, first of all, be renewed in your nature, or you will not be ready. You must be washed from your sins, or you will not be ready. You must be justified in Christ's righteousness and you must put on His wedding dress, or else you will not be ready. You must be reconciled to God. You must be made like God or you will not be ready. Or, to come to the parable before us, you must have a lamp—and that lamp must be fed with heavenly oil—and it must continue to burn brightly, or else you will not be ready. No child of darkness can go into that place of God's Light! You must be brought out of nature's darkness into God's marvelous Light, or else you will never be ready to go in with Christ to the marriage and to be forever with Him.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, I pray you often look to your readiness for going in to the marriage. Are you all ready now? If, at this moment, the archangel's trumpet voice should sound, or if now, as lately happened to certain dear friends of ours, you should be struck down with paralysis or apoplexy and, in a moment, pass away, are you ready for the great change? Are you quite ready to go in with Christ to the marriage? I would advise you not only to be ready in all the great things, but to also be ready in the little things, and in everything that concerns yourself in relation to your Lord. Perhaps you have not yet publicly put on Christ in Baptism. Then, in that respect, you are not ready. Do not delay obedience to Christ's command, remembering His own Words. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." With your mouth confess the Lord Jesus, if with your heart you have believed on Him. Disregard no commands of Christ!

Perhaps you have never yet been to His table of communion. If that is the case, I do not think you can call yourself "ready" to go in with Him to the marriage. Perhaps you call these things little matters—and they are small compared with that greater matter of which I have already spoken. But I would not wish you to die with a single command of Christ's neglected. You have not prayed with your boys and girls yet, have you? Well, then, you are not ready. You have not made your will, you have not set

your house in order—I would have you get all such things quite ready, for a little unreadiness may greatly trouble you in your departing moments. You have not yet fulfilled what has been very nearly a vow toward God—you have not yet done what you ought to do of your work for the present generation. You have not yet been to that ungodly friend and warned him, as your heart a little while ago prompted you to do. I would like to have you, my Brother, or Sister, in such a state that if you fell down dead on your way home, tonight, others might regret it, but you would be thankful that for your sudden death was sudden glory.

Mr. Whitefield used to say that he did not like to go to sleep at night if he had left his gloves out of his hat where he might find them in the morning. It is delightful to feel, "All is right between God and my soul, between myself and my wife and my children and all my surroundings. Now let death come when it will! Let the sweet chariot swing low—as the Jubilee Singers' song quaintly puts it—and let it bear my soul away up to the heavenly country where I shall go in with Him to the marriage."

Be ready, dear Friends, be ready! Especially be ready in the great matter of salvation, but see that you are ready in *everything*. You know that when you are going to see a very special friend, or some person of importance, you put on your best coat and everything that will make you ready to see him and, afterwards, when you get near the friend's door, or the great man's mansion, I notice that you brush off any little dust from the street that may have been blown upon your garments—and so you get quite ready to meet him when he appears. So, in spiritual affairs, even if you have on your best robe, yet there may still be a little brushing needed—and I would have you do it so that it may be said of you without anything to qualify it—"they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut."

I read, in an American tract, a little sketch written by a gentleman who, having often to cross the Great Lakes, was in the habit of providing himself with a life belt in case of need. One night, while he was asleep, an alarm was raised and he rushed on deck with his life belt round him, but found that there was no cause for fear. He went back downstairs and as he lay in bed, he had something like a dream, though it was really a waking reverie, and it took this shape. He thought he was on board the great vessel in which all of us are floating on the broad sea of time and that a great and terrible storm came on. There were some men on deck with life belts round them. They had been laughed at while the weather was calm and the sea was smooth, but, as they stood there, with the vessel rocking and the timbers straining, there were none to mock them, but many who greatly envied the quiet peacefulness which rested on their countenances. You know who those men are and what is their perfection. Faith in Jesus is the great life belt—let the tempest come when it may, faith in Christ will enable us to swim through every flood till we reach the happy shores of Heaven!

As this gentleman stood on the deck and looked about him, he heard one man say, "I was going to buy one of those belts. I lived just opposite the shop where they were sold and I was often told by friends that I had better get one at once, and I meant to—but I put it off and started just a

little too late to get it, so I was obliged to come without it, though I meant to have one." The gentleman saw this man washed overboard, as the others were who had not a life belt, and his good intention could not save him. No doubt there are many here who have meant to get the *spiritual* life belt and they mean to do so now, so they say. Ah, Heaven is being filled with people who have believed in Jesus—and Hell is being filled with people who *meant to* believe in Jesus, but did not! That is the difference between the two classes, but what a difference it will make between them when they come to die! These are the people who crowd the corridors of Hell— men and women who *meant to* trust the Savior, but who never did. They lived just opposite the places where these life belts were to be had and they meant to have had them—but they had them not when the last great storm came on—and so they were lost, and lost forever!

There was another man who said, "I have been across this sea so often without a belt that I thought I would run the risk once more." He, too, was washed away. And there are some of you, my Hearers, who say, "I have lived twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, or seventy years and I am not dead yet! I will run the risk for another year." Really, nowadays, nobody seems to grow old. You meet a man of 75 or 80, and he thinks that he will be old, some day, but he has known somebody who lived till he was 99—and he thinks he shall reach the same age. I have heard of an aged farmer who wanted to buy his neighbor's field. He was 80 and his neighbor was five years younger, so, when his neighbor would not sell him the land, he said to him, "Ah, well, never mind. You are an old man and I can buy it when you are dead!" That is just the way people talk. "All men think all men mortal but themselves." Here was a man who was five years older than the other, yet he was going to buy the field after the younger man was dead! It is such people who say, "I have been sailing over this sea so long without a life belt, I will risk it still longer." Thus they, also, are lost!

There was another man who ran to his trunk to get his life belt—he pulled up the lid and took out the belt—but he found it was out of order and quite useless. The fact was, it was a bad one when he bought it—and after carrying it about with him for a little while, he became weary of such a useless appendage, so he threw it into his trunk—and now that he really needed preservation from the storm, it was of no use to him. You are here, Sir, I know you! You used to make a profession of religion. You had a life belt once, so you thought, but it was not a good one, or you would have it now. It was one that *looked* like the right thing and you wore it for a while. You used to be at the Prayer Meeting, you even became a member of the church! You carried your religion for a time, but what has become of it? Where were you last night? I repeat the question—*Where were you last night?* If the devil had laid hold upon you and taken you down to his own dominions, there would have been none who would have cried, "Stop, thief!" when he flew away with you, for they would have known that he was only taking his own property which he had found on his own premises. Yet you did once make a profession of religion—you used to sit at the Communion Table. Possibly you were

even baptized. But where is your life belt now? It is gone! God save you who have become backsliders, lest you also prove to be apostates! If you have turned back, then return, return, return, while yet there is time, while yet there is hope for you! And if you never were converted, may God begin the gracious work within you even now!

There was another one on board who had a life belt and he seemed very pleased when he put it on, but when the waves washed him off the vessel, he floated for a few moments and then down he sank. The fact was, his belt was a counterfeit! Somebody had told him that the other sort was so very expensive and here was one that looked even better. True, there was a whisper that it would not stand the necessary tests, but the man did not care much about that, for his belt looked as good as the genuine one and he had the credit of standing with those sensible people who had the true thing, so it answered very well *until he came into the surging sea.* So there may be some of you here who have counterfeit life belts. You are members of a church, you come to the Communion Table and everybody respects you. Ah, but with a sham religion, how will you do in the swelling of Jordan? What will you do when heart and flesh fail? Oh, before it is too late, may God take the sham away from you and give you genuine godliness—a new heart and a right spirit!

As the gentleman looked round him, he saw yet another of the passengers—a young man who was clinging to someone else who had on a life belt. He was crying to him, "Let me lay hold on you! Will not your belt be sufficient to sustain both of us?" But the other answered, "It will only suffice for one. It will only keep one afloat." Then the gentleman thought of our Savior's parable of the ten virgins and of what the foolish said unto the wise, "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out." But the wise answered, "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you." So let us remember that nothing but *personal* piety will avail—the religion of another can be of no service to you! Our Lord's message to all is, "You must be born again," and there is no such thing as being born again by proxy! You must fly to Jesus for refuge and there is no one who can do this for you. You must, by the Holy Spirit's power, trust in Christ for yourselves! No one can believe for you.

I rejoice that there are so many here who have on the genuine Gospel life belt. Standing in Christ Jesus, they are not afraid—

"No condemnation do they dread.
For Jesus is their All."

They can without a tremor face floods or flames, and the devouring deep! They can even be—

"Fearless of Hell and ghastly death,"

knowing that they shall be safely landed on Heaven's peaceful shore, to go no more out forever!

II. I am almost thankful that I have only a few minutes to spend upon the second part of my subject—THE UNREADY AND THEIR EXCLUSION. I will try to say much in a few words—and I beg you to let every word abide with you.

What, then, was this exclusion? "The door was shut." It was not ajar, it was shut. And it was so tightly closed that *there was a complete severance* between the guests inside and the too-late foolish virgins outside.

Yet, *this severance was perfectly just.* The foolish virgins ought to have been there on time. They ought to have gone in with the bridegroom. Was it not their very office to attend him and accompany him home? The time for entering in had fully come—it was the right and proper time. The bridegroom had given them all that night to get ready and they had even complained of the length of the delay before he came so, when the door was at last shut, it was very late. They had had all that time in which to get the oil and to trim their lamps. It was not as though the bridegroom had come in the first watch of the night and they had said, "We had not time to trim our lamps." No, it was not so. So, dear Friends, you have had all this life, all these years of your Lord's long-suffering and patient entreaty—and it will be just that the door should be shut when your last hour shall come. Oh, be wise before it is too late!

When "the door was shut," *the exclusion was final.* In all my searching of the Word of God, I have never found any kind of hope that the door, once shut, will ever be opened again. There may be a "larger hope" indulged in by some, but I implore you never to risk your souls upon that rotten plank, for there is no Scripture warrant for it whatever! Even if there were, what larger hope do you need than that which the Gospel itself affords? Why do you not get ready to enter in with Christ to the marriage? Why be left to tarry outside? What is there in the cold midnight that should tempt you to delay with the risk of never being able to enter the door? If there were any such larger hope as deludes so many, it still must be a desperate risk to trust to it. They also who talk about annihilation, or restitution, at any rate offer you nothing that ought to charm you away from immediate faith in Christ and immediate and everlasting salvation by Him. So far as you, yourself, are concerned, it should cease to be an awful thing that, in the world to come, "There are no acts of pardon passed." Why should you throw away the certainty of a present salvation and immediate deliverance from the curse, which you may have at this moment—which you shall have at once if you believe in Jesus—under some foolish dream that perhaps the door of mercy may open after ages of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth? No, rather be ready to enter in with Christ to the marriage, for, as the Lord lives, I cannot clear my soul of all responsibility unless I tell you that, as I read the Bible more and more, I am more and more certain that when that door has once been shut, it will never again be opened to any living soul! Where death meets you, judgment will find you, and there you will remain to all eternity! I pray you, risk not your eternal destiny, but, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found. Call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

Who were these persons who were shut out when the door was closed? *They bore the name of virgins,* yet the door was shut against them. They were not rank outsiders, nor mere tramps of the street. They were not in-

fidels, not agnostics, but members of the Church! They were called virgins, yet against them the door was shut. They also had lamps—lamps that once burned as brightly as others. There was, for a while, no difference between the luster of their lamps and the luster of the wisest, yet they were shut out. They had at least some oil—they were, for a time, companions of the wise virgins. They went out with them to meet the bridegroom and the wise virgins, probably, never suspected that these others were foolish, until, in the middle of the night, they found, too late, that their lamps were going out. O Sirs! O Sirs, shall we drink out of the same Communion cup and eat of the same bread at the Lord's Table, and be reminded of His broken body and His shed blood, and yet shall some of us be shut in with God forever, and shall some of you be shut out forever because you have not received the Holy Spirit, because you have not the secret inward store of the oil of Grace? May God prevent it by His Grace!

Notice that *these people acted in much the same way as those acted who went in with the bridegroom.* They went forth to meet the bridegroom, they went on the same road and at the same rate as the others went and they went to sleep, alas, as the others went to sleep. They awoke as the others awoke and they began to trim their lamps as the others were trimming theirs. Their spot seemed to be the spot of God's children and they appeared to have many of the marks of the election of Grace—yet they were not of it, nor in it, for they had no oil in their vessels with their lamps, no Grace, no indwelling of the Holy Spirit, no supernatural operation of Him who works in the saints to will and to do of His own good pleasure. They were so like the real bride of Christ that only the Bridegroom could tell the difference until the midnight came—and then the difference was apparent to all observers!

It seems to me, also, that these persons who were shut out, *were people who knew something about prayer.* They did not, that night, for the first time pick up the agonized cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us." They had probably been *habitue's* of Prayer Meetings. They had been where people called Christ, "Lord," and they used that formula themselves. Perhaps they might have said, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works?" Yet the door was shut against them and they, outside, knew something of what was going on inside and, therefore, would gnash their teeth all the more because they could not enter! The door was shut against those who had seen the Light of God, but whose lamps had gone out! They had been carrying in their hands the very lamps which entitled them to claim a place in the procession, but those lamps had gone out—and, therefore, they were not entitled to any such place—and the door was shut against them! O you who are only *professors* of religion, will you shut yourselves outside the door of mercy? You will do so if you neglect to obtain that secret oil of Grace which can only be supplied by the Holy Spirit!

Before another Sunday comes around, your preacher may be suddenly struck down, as one of our Brothers has been. I may never have another opportunity of speaking to you who are professors, and warning you to

make sure that you are also *possessors* and that you really have the Grace of God in your souls. Or, possibly, some of you may be taken *away* without a moment's warning, as one of our friends has been. Suppose that then you could turn round upon me, in another world, and say, "Preacher, we heard you again and again. We listened to all that came from your lips. We even came out on Thursday nights to listen to you, yet you prophesied smooth things to us and you said, 'Peace, peace, when there was no peace.'" I pray God that I may have no man's blood upon the skirts of my garments in that last tremendous day and, therefore, I bid you, now, to escape from the wrath to come! Flee to Christ, flee to His dear Cross and look up to His bleeding wounds, for—

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

Flee from your sins, flee from yourselves! Flee from any worldly pursuits which entangle you and put your trust in Jesus Christ and Him crucified! And from your heart say—

"Jesus, Your blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress,

"I will go in with You to the marriage, and when the door is shut, I shall be on the right side of it—

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

The Lord save us all, for His name's sake! Amen.

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

ALL AND ALL IN ALL
NO. 2501

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 24, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 3, 1885.

"Christ is all, and in all."
Colossians 3:11.

"That God may be all in all."
1 Corinthians 15:28.

IN our two texts there are three "alls" rising, one out of the other—the first leading to the second and the second conducting to the third. You will notice at once that the first two are in the present tense. "Christ *is* all" and, "Christ is in all." The third one refers to the future—it is yet to be fulfilled. When the great consummation shall come, then shall God be, "all in all." I shall not detain you with any sort of preface, for my sole endeavor at this time will be to impress these texts upon your memory—in the hope that the Spirit of God may make them a living and abiding influence upon your hearts and lives—that to you, Christ may be all, that Christ may be in you all, and that so, in all that you do, and say, and are, God may be all in all.

I. We begin at THE FOUNDATION WHERE ALL BLESSING BEGINS. "Christ is all."

These are but few words, yet what Divine shall ever fully expound them? "Christ is all." Here is sea-room enough for all godly mariners! Yet with the best wind that ever blew to speed the ship along, and with every sail set and filled with the breeze from Heaven, who shall ever be able to go from one shore of this great Truth of God to the other—"Christ is all"? I shall not venture upon such a voyage! I can but look across this sea and ask you to kindly notice the connection in which the text stands that we may learn exactly what the Apostle meant. Writing, "to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse," Paul says, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all."

That is to say, *in the matter of salvation,* "*Christ is all."* That which had often seemed the most important thing in the world is here thrown into the background by the Apostolic declaration, "There is neither Greek nor Jew." For a long time it seemed as if the eternal Light of God was only revealed to the eyes of the seed of the house of Israel. They sat in the brightness and all the rest of the world lay in dense darkness. But, behold, the Christ has come, "a Light to lighten the Gentiles," and henceforth salvation is "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man," but, "Christ is all."

It is a great privilege to be born of godly parents, to have come of a race that for generations has feared the Lord. But let no man trust merely in his natural descent. If you had sprung from a lineage of saints. If every one of your progenitors had feared God, yet still, nothing of all this could matter for your own salvation. "Christ is all." Now may the Gentile dog eat of the crumbs that fall from the Master's table where He feeds His Israel! No, the dog is transformed into a child—he who was far off is made near! In the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, both Jew and Gentile are made one and all the sheep of the Good Shepherd are sheltered in the same fold! We who believe in Jesus are children of him who was called the father of the faithful and though, according to the flesh, "Abraham was ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledges us not," yet by faith we become the spiritual seed of the great father of all Believers! As he believed in a son being born according to God's promise, and in a seed to which the Covenant promises were given, even so do we. And entering into union with Christ Jesus, that blessed Son of the promise, we become joint-heirs with Him, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." You see, then, dear Friends, that it is not *race*, or *pedigree*, or *descent* that saves the soul, but that "Christ is all."

Then Paul goes on to say, "There is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision," from which I gather that *there is nothing in outward ceremonies which can save.* Everything is still of Christ—"Christ is all." That circumcision in the flesh was ordained of God and it was the mark of the seed that He had chosen. It was not, therefore, lightly to be spoken of. But now, "we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." At this day even the ancient Divine ordinance is put in the background, for, "Christ is all." So is it with every other ordinance, whether ordained of God or of man. It must never be placed in the front, as if it were the means of salvation! I say to you who may have been sprinkled, or to you who may have been immersed—to you who may bow at your altars, or to you who may come to the Communion Table—I do not place all these rites on a level, certainly, for some are of God and some are not, but I do place them all on a par in this respect—that they enter not into the essence of our salvation! And I say to all of you, "These things cannot save you, for, 'Christ is all.'" Be you who you may, and do you what you may, you shall not be saved because of your natural birth, nor because of any supposed holy acts that you may perform! Neither shall you be saved by any transactions that may be the work of a human priest! You must have Christ as your Savior and you must rest in Him, alone, or you cannot be saved! He is the one foundation and, "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," for, "Christ is all." The Lord Jesus Christ sums up everything that ordinances can possibly mean and all that pedigree and descent can possibly bring—and He is infinitely more than all of them!

Read on in this Epistle and you will find that as race and ceremonialism are both put into the background, so also is culture. "There is neither Barbarian nor Scythian, but Christ is all." Of course it was for many reasons much better to be a Roman citizen than to be a rude barbarian.

And it is much better, now, to be a civilized man than an untutored Indian of the Wild West. But so far as vital godliness and the soul's salvation are concerned, there is no difference! The simplest and most illiterate, upon believing in Jesus Christ, shall find that "Christ is all." And the most learned and most fully instructed, if they bring any of their learning and their culture and put it side by side with Christ as a ground of trust, shall sorrowfully discover that none of those things can be placed on an equality with Him, but that, "Christ is all."

I rejoice, Brothers and Sisters, in this Truth of God! If the Gospel of Christ were something eclectic which could only be received by a superior few, what a poor prospect there would be for the great mass of people among whom we dwell! If the Gospel of Christ were a matter so deep and profound that it could not be understood except by years of educated thought, where would they be who have never had any culture and, perhaps, can scarcely read the letters of a boy's schoolbook, if, this day, they were lying upon the bed of sickness, expecting soon to stand before God? Blessed be God, we have a remedy for sin's sickness which the Great Physician understands! And if *He* is well acquainted with it, it matters not whether the patient fully comprehends it or not! Blessed be God, the effect of Christ's medicine does not depend upon the degree in which we can realize how it acts, but if we receive it by *faith*, if it penetrates into the *heart*, if it takes possession of the *affections*, it will work in us that wondrous change by which we shall be delivered from the love of sin and saved both from its condemnation and its power! Thank God for a simple Gospel! Blessed be His name that "Christ is all"! If, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, you have learned that Christ died for the ungodly. If you know that He is the Son of God and the one great Propitiation for sin, and if you accept Him as such, you have that which has delivered you from going down into the Pit, for God has found a ransom even for you!

Once more. By this expression, Paul means us to understand that *all conditions and position of men in this life are put on a level before Christ,* for He adds, "There is neither bond nor free; but Christ is all." When the Gospel of Jesus Christ came into the world, it contemplated the saving of bondmen as well as of freemen. Of course there was a great distinction between being bond or free, and the Apostle wrote, "If you may be made free, use it rather," but as to the real power of God's Grace, there was no distinction between the noblest citizen of Rome and the poor slave who wore an iron collar and was fastened, like a dog, at his master's gate! Christ's Grace could enter into the heart of the servile, as well as into the heart of the noble—and could work alike in each.

Now, hear you, Sirs! It is well that you should be industrious, that you should be thrifty and that you should make your way in the world. But this is not the way to eternal life! What if you should work till your fingertips were raw? What if you labor during the livelong day and night and deprive yourselves of needed sustenance, that you may hoard up gold and silver? With all this, you cannot buy salvation, or be an inch nearer to it. "Christ is all." And if you lie penniless upon a workhouse bed, there is that in Christ which can save you! If you beg your food from

door to door, yet shall you not stand at a disadvantage with this great and blessed Gospel, for it comes freely to you with this message and, as it asks of you no *learning*, so it asks of you no wealth, no rank and no position—for, from first to last—"Christ is all."

Thus have I taken the words in their connection and they are full of important teaching. Remember that they mean just this—that *to the man who is saved, Christ is all his trust.* Our healing lies in His stripes. Our life lies in His death. Our pardon lies in His having suffered the punishment due to us. Our eternal life is in the fact that He once died for us and that He now lives to make intercession for us. "Christ is all." You must not add anything to Christ as your ground of confidence, but just lean the weight of your sin, your sorrow, your needs and your desires wholly and entirely upon Him who lives to stand for you before God. Christ, then, is all our trust!

And, as for our belief, *Christ is all our creed.* What He has taught us personally and by His Holy Spirit through the Epistles—what He gives us in His Word—this is what we believe, and nothing else! The Bible and the Bible, alone, is the religion of a Christian! "Christ is all"—and all the Truth that there is in this Book is in Him. This revelation of the Word of God is the same revelation as that which is made in the Christ, Himself, who is the true Logos, the Word of God. "Christ is all" as our creed.

And, further, *Christ is all as our example.* You may safely do what He did and you may not do what *He* would not have done. You may judge of the right or wrong of everything by this question—What would Jesus Christ do in these circumstances? You may thus know what you should do. And what you cannot suppose He would have thought of doing, you must not venture to do, for, "Christ is all." He draws a ring around us and we must not go outside that circumference. He is the atmosphere in which we are to live. He is about us. He is above us. He is beneath us. He is within us. He is everywhere and, to us, if we are Christians, "Christ is all."

There is the foundation of all our faith and hope—and I want you who preach and you who teach the children to always keep to this one Truth of God—that "Christ is all." Many other things have a measure of instruction in them, but Christ is all that is necessary. If you want to save men, if you truly wish to elevate men, if you desire still further to exalt them to the very highest degree of which human nature is capable, remember that "Christ is all" as your lever, and in Him is your fulcrum, and in Him is the power to use the lever! "Christ is all." You need not go abroad for anything, for "you are complete in Him." The ship is furnished from stem to stern in Him. The house, from its foundation to its rooftop, is all complete in Him. "Christ is all." Oh, to know Him! Oh, to have Him as our own! Oh, to live wholly upon Him! Oh, to grow like He and always to keep before our mind's eyes this great Truth that, "Christ is all"!

II. Now we are going a step farther to consider the second part of our first text—"Christ is all, *and in all."* This is a matter of experience and it reveals to us HOW THE WORK OF GRACE PROCEEDS. Christ is in all His people, this gracious possession is the work of the Spirit of God, by whose means Christ is formed in us, the hope of Glory.

To my mind it is a very beautiful thing that the Lord Jesus Christ, when He comes into the soul, does *not annihilate any part of the personality,* but shines in each separate being, for He is not only all, but He is *in* all His people! There is, for instance, the Greek—the "Gentile"—shall be the word. Very well, the Grace of God does not turn the Gentile into a Jew. He remains a Gentile, but Christ is in him and, therefore, he is made into a new creature. There have been some beautiful specimens of holiness and Grace found in many of the Gentile nations dwelling in the islands of the sea, or among all sorts and conditions of men scattered up and down the world—and Christ has shone gloriously in them. Then comes the Jew. When he is saved, Christ is in him. The Apostles of Jesus were mostly, at least, of that race, and many later Believers have been of the seed of Abraham. But Christ has been in them and He has gloriously displayed Himself in them. The Lord Jesus Christ, dwelling in the Jew, leaves him still a member of the house of Abraham, but, through the Presence of the Lord Jesus within him, how wondrously his whole character is exalted!

Then you have the man who is circumcised and the man who is uncircumcised—and in each of these, if he is saved, Christ dwells. And each one, therefore, lives according to his light, his knowledge and his standing. Christ enters into the barbarian and though in certain natural respects he remains, to a large extent, what he was before, yet, as soon as Christ enters into him, all of his barbarism that is *sinful* disappears! He still retains the free spirit of the child of the wilderness or the son of the woods, but how grandly has Christ displayed Himself in such men as he is! The personal piety of a Red Indian, or of an African freshly taken from the wilds of the Dark Continent has been as brilliant and as beautiful—certainly as fresh, bright, clear and striking as the piety of the most educated of the Caucasian race! Whether he is barbarian or Scythian, if Christ is formed in him, the hope of Glory, it is only another form of the same exquisite beauty!

It is always a pity when our missionaries try to make other nations into English people. If we have pride enough to think so, we may regard ourselves as the model for others to imitate, but it would be a great pity if we should be such a model that every native of India must copy the Englishman! I like the worship of our Black friends in Jamaica and in the Southern States of America, with its delightful simplicity, its vivacity—yes, and I venture to say, even its grotesqueness. And I would not have a black man begin slavishly to imitate the white man. Let him continue to be a black man and let Christ shine in the black man's face right gloriously. Yes, let a man be a brown man, or a yellow man, or a red man, or whatever color God made him! The more he keeps to his own nationality and reflects the Glory of Christ from that angle, the more will Christ's Gospel triumph and the more will Christ Himself be honored!

The Apostle adds, as we have already noticed, "Neither bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." May the day speedily come when there shall not be a bondsman under Heaven! But in those days of the worst of all slavery, the Christian slaves were among the most brilliant gems in the Redeemer's diadem. Oh, what brave deeds they did for the Crucified One!

I should think that it was harder to be a Christian *freeman*, in those days, than to be a Christian slave. But whether bond or free, whether the man took his place in the Forum among the senators, or his lot was cast yonder among the slaves—either case, if Christ was in him—the Light of God shone gloriously from Him and God was magnified thereby! Christ is all, and Christ is in all His people, each one remaining the same in His individuality, but Christ shining in each one!

I must again refer you to the connection of our text and ask you to read in the 9th and 10th verses, where Paul says, "You have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." You recollect that Adam was made in the image of God and that he lost that image by his sin. But when Christ enters into a man and he is created anew in Christ Jesus, then *he receives afresh the image of God.* The image of God is Christ Jesus, for He is the express image of His Father's Glory. He that has seen Christ has seen the Father and, inasmuch as Christ enters into all Believers and makes them like Himself, the image of God is thereby restored in all Believers.

So, note again that because Christ dwells in him, *every Believer becomes a copy of Christ.* Read the 13th verse—"Forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if anyone has a quarrel against another, even as Christ forgave you, so also do you." Is not that beautiful—Christ in every Believer—that Christ the image of God, and that Christian the image of Christ so that, just as Jesus freely forgave, so does every Christian freely forgive! Do you find it difficult to forgive one who has wronged you? Then you will find it difficult to get to Heaven! If you cannot enter Heaven unless you are like Christ, how can you be like Christ unless you can freely forgive? This seems a grand opportunity for you to stand on the same platform with Christ and, in some respects, to do the works of Christ when, having been slighted, ungratefully treated, misrepresented, slandered and injured, you can say, "I as freely forgive you as the Lord Jesus Christ forgave *me."* This is the token and evidence that Christ is in you—when you become imitators of Christ as dear children!

It is a remarkable fact, as I have often said to you, that, although our Lord Jesus Christ is more perfect than any other example—indeed, the *only perfect example*—yet it is more easy to imitate Christ than it is to imitate some of the best of His people! That is curious, but it is a fact. I know a Brother whom I greatly admire, an eminent Christian—I would not mention my own name in the same day with his, he lives so near to God and is such a truly gracious man—yet I could not imitate him. It is quite impossible that my nature should ever become exactly like his. Another Brother, whom I used to know—he is now with God—was equally good, but he was as different from the other good man as anyone could be. They were as opposite as the poles in their temperament and behavior. The first Brother I mentioned is solid, calm, quiet, unexcitable. And I should think that he very seldom laughs and that even then, he does not know that he has done it!

My other friend used to, sometimes, literally roar with laughter! He was full of earnest love for the souls of men and God blessed him greatly

in his service. He had a merry vein and a humorous spirit—and I was more at home with him than I was with the first one. Yet the Lord Jesus Christ is far more easy to imitate than either of my two friends, for sometimes I am so depressed that I cannot show all the cheerfulness of the one. And at other times, having such a humorous vein in my nature, I would be hypocritical and unnatural if I suppressed it and always acted as if I were as solemn as death itself! But in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, albeit that there is never any mention of laughter, yet there were ripples of holy pleasantry in His life and in His Character though He was "a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." He is more of a Man than the best of other men, and more imitable, though altogether inimitable, than those who can be imitated and, perhaps, can even be excelled.

What is more, Christ in each one of these Believers *creates them all into one body.* Read the 14th and 15th verses—"And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you are called in one body and be you thankful." The same life is in all Believers—in you and in me—well, then, we are one1 The same life is in ten thousand Christians—then they, also, are all one! If the same life quickens them and they live under the same influences, and they act according to the same rule, then are they one and Christ becomes the glorious Head of a body which He renders glorious by quickening it with His own indwelling!

I like to think of this blessed Truth of God—Christ in all Believers creating them into one body—this is the beginning of true unity. Here, for instance, is a man who says that he is baptized as I am, but if he has not the life of God within him, I cannot get on with him, whatever he may call himself—I am not in union with him. There, perhaps, comes a Methodist, and we begin to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ and I find that he loves Him with all his heart, and I know that I do, though I wish that I loved Him more. And directly we two get on together—we feel that we are one in Christ because of the one Life which quickens us. Do you not feel it to be so? Have you not been reading a book, sometimes, and said to yourself, "Oh, what a blessed book this is! How full of the Divine life"? Yes, and after you have read it, you have been surprised to find that the person who wrote it was a Romanist—for there are many books of that kind—or the writer was a member of some church that, in many respects, lies in very dangerous error! You say to yourself, "I do not care where this man lived, or what he did, I am one with him as far as he is one with Christ."

The one common feeling of union to Christ and Christ being in us makes us feel that we are one with each other. Wherever there is, as Augustine used to say, "*aliquid Christi*"—"anything of Christ"—there our love must go forth, we cannot help it! Christ in you all makes you into one body and unites you together in a mysterious and unique manner. There is not a parallel to it anywhere else—it gives such a living, loving, abiding, undeniable unity that even if you wish to forget it, you cannot! If the man is in Christ, you must love him, do what you may, for you are one body with him.

Such is this manifestation of Christ in His people, that it leads, further, to *the offering of one oblation.* Read the 16th verse—"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with Grace in your hearts to the Lord." Yes, all God's people love God's Word! They all find a great sweetness in "Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." They all delight to sing praises unto the Most High. Montgomery truly wrote—

"The saints in prayer appear as one,"

but it is equally true that the saints in *praise* appear as one. And the saints in love to the Word of God appear as one because Christ, being in them, and Christ being one, they are knit to one another. Oh, how blessed it is for us to have Christ in us!

And lastly upon this point, all that I have said leads up to eac*h one acting to the glory of one name,* for if Christ is in you, the 17th verse is true of you—"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." What a life to lead—Christ taking such entire possession of a man that everything he does, he does as if Christ, Himself, were doing it, because he does it in Christ's name and by Christ's power! As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God," so that it shall no longer be yourselves that do it, but Christ that dwells in you. This shall sanctify the most common actions of everyday life and make the whole of the Christian's career to be sublime, so that while he treads the earth beneath his feet, literally, he is also doing it *spiritually*— and all the while his conversation is in Heaven.

I must just linger one minute here. You all agreed with me when I spoke about Christ being all. You understood clearly that He is the only ground of our hope. Can you also go with me in this part of my subject—Christ is in all His people? Is Christ formed in *you,* the hope of Glory? Do you know anything about an *indwelling* Christ? Verily I say unto you, the Christ on the Cross will never save you unless there is also Christ *within you*! It is the Christ on the Cross in whom we trust, but the outcome of that trust is that He is born in our hearts! His power comes from His love, His Grace, His truth, Himself—and we live because He lives in us. Do you understand this? If you do not, I pray God that you may, for, unless Christ is in you, you know what the Apostle says—"Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are reprobate?" If you are disapproved of God, Christ is *not* in you. If Christ is not in you, you are disapproved of God. But if He lives in you, you are "accepted in the Beloved" and that life of yours shall never die out, but you shall, by-and-by, behold your Savior's face in the kingdom of His Glory.

Brothers and Sisters, we are not what we ought to be! We are not what we want to be, we are not what we shall be! But we are something very different from what we used to be. The change in us is as great as in that blind man who said, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." The change is not merely external, but it is vital! The Lord has taken away the heart of stone out of our flesh and given us back the heart of flesh which belonged to man in his unfallen nature—and then

upon this heart of flesh He has also worked wondrously, making it conscious to spiritual influences which once did not affect it, and writing upon the fleshy tablets of that renewed heart, His perfect Law. Glory be to the name of Jehovah, a notable miracle has been performed upon us! A miracle so marvelous that it is comparable to the resurrection from the dead and, in some respects, it even surpasses the wonders of creation, itself! We shall tell this story in the streets of the New Jerusalem and we shall draw around us attentive crowds as we narrate our experience and tell the tale of the sin which ruined us, and of the mercy which reclaimed us!

Thus have we gone up the second rung of this golden ladder. First, "Christ is all." Next, "Christ is in all."

III. Now kindly turn back in your Bibles to our other text—the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, 15th chapter, and 28th verse—"That God may be all in all." First, Christ is all. Next, Christ is in all His people, but THE CONSUMMATION, the top-stone of all is "that God may be all in all."

The passage in which this text stands seems to be a very difficult one to understand. The common meaning that is given to it by nearly every interpreter I have ever met with, I do not believe or accept. It seems to a great many to be taught here that there is to come a time, called, "the end," when the Lord Jesus Christ, having conquered all His enemies, is to resign His position, abdicate His Throne and cease to be King, "that God may be all in all." Let us read the connection of the passage—"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He has put all things under His feet. But when He says all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son, also, Himself, be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."

The general meaning given to these words is that there is to be a time when the mediatorial Kingdom of Christ will come to an end of itself and He will deliver up the Kingdom to God, ceasing, Himself, to be King. I can only say that if this is the teaching of this text, it is not taught anywhere else in the whole Bible—nobody can find any parallel passage to it, or anything like it. Neither do I believe that it is taught in the Bible at all—neither here nor anywhere else! And I can say that for this reason I cannot see that there is to be any end whatever to the mediatorial Kingdom of Christ.

You perceive that *it is the Son who is to be subject to the Father* but it is of the Son that we read in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Unto the Son He says, Your Throne, O God, is forever and ever," where the Father, manifestly speaking to the Son, in His complex Person declares that His Throne is to be forever and ever. Brethren, in the day when the Christ shall have overcome all His enemies and Death, itself,

shall be destroyed, there will be no abolition of His mediatorial kingdom! There still stands in the Scriptures this promise of our Lord Jesus Christ—"To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me on My Throne, even as I, also, overcame, and am set down with My Father on His Throne." Does that mean that we are to have a temporary reign with a temporary Christ—a brief rule with a short-lived Monarch? I do not believe it!

Moreover, the priesthood enters into the mediatorial office most eminently, yet "the Lord swore and will not repent, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." If the priesthood is to continue forever—and Melchisedec was king as well as priest—then the kingdom of Christ is to continue, world without end. Moreover, in the Book of the Revelation—not to mention the almost innumerable passages to the same effect—we find that when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, it is added, "*and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever."* When the kingdoms are brought back, they will be the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ. Then we read of "the throne of God and of the Lamb." And when all kingdoms are subdued and the Lord God Omnipotent reigns, then we are told to expect the announcement, "The marriage of the Lamb is come and His wife has made herself ready." What does all this mean but a continuance of that dispensation in which the Christ, the Son of Man, as the Son of God, shall be still at the head of His people, still their Priest and still their King and still reigning? And that is exactly what this passage says, if you will kindly look at it again and dismiss all previous prejudices from your minds!

The fact is our Lord Jesus Christ has performed and is still performing, *a work which will end in putting everything into its proper order.* Now, the proper order, according to the first Epistle to the Corinthians, the 11th chapter, and the third verse, is this—"I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." This is how it stands—the woman with the man for her head, the man with Christ for his Head—and Christ with God for His Head. Such is the Scriptural order—an order which has been disturbed all through except with regard to the Father and the Son, for God has always been the Head of Christ! Now, Christ has come into the world to restore that right order from the bottom, right up to the top! And it is to be so restored, first, by Christ becoming the Head of men—when He shall have put down all His enemies under His feet and when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power, "for He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

Christ is come into the world that all the evil that is in the world should be subdued. And He will drive it out of the world. There shall remain no power that shall dare revolt against the majesty of Heaven! Over the whole surface of this globe, beneath the new heavens and on the new earth, there shall yet be the Kingdom established of which Jesus Christ shall be the supreme Head and over which He shall reign forever, King of Kings and Lord of Lords! The Lord hasten it in His own time!

Well, and what then?" asks one. "Does it not say that He is to deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, and to be subject to the Father?" Exactly so. Supposing that India had been in revolt against our Queen and that a Viceroy had been sent there, and that he had warred against all the rebellious tribes and kingdoms, and they had all been conquered. He telegraphs to the Queen, "Your Majesty's empire is at your feet." Does he therefore cease to be Viceroy? Not necessarily in the least degree! He may still remain as ruler and yet have delivered up the kingdom. I believe that to be the meaning of this passage—that Christ has so conquered the Kingdom that it is all God's.

But what does it mean when it says that *then* shall the Son also be subject unto the Father? It means that He is subject, now, and that *even then* He will continue to be subject to the Father, that is all. It cannot mean that at a certain time Christ will *become* subject to God, because He has been so ever since that day of His glorious humiliation when, for His people's redemption, he took upon Himself the form of a Servant—and that condition is not to cease. He is still to be the Representative of God even when He shall have put down all power and all authority under His feet and when God has put all things under His feet. It is manifest that He that did put all things under Him is not, Himself, under Him. And it is clear, from the text, that even then, God shall be the Head of Christ. I do not know whether you catch my thought yet, but it is just this—all evil subdued, all the saints having Christ dwelling in them, Christ the Head of all these saints, and then God, still as God, all the more surely and securely supreme over all things—for the Head of Christ is God and God is all in all.

The conclusion of the whole matter is this, that every day this should be the great consummation to be kept in view, "that God may be all in all." For this, the heroic labors of the Son of Man here on earth! For this, His cruel death! For this, His rising again! For this, His grasping of the mediatorial scepter! For this, His ruling in Providence! For this, His management of the world's affairs! For this, His Second Coming and the glory of His saints! All this, while it continues to bring Glory to Him, has been done in subjection to His great Father's will. He has accomplished it all as the Father's Representative and Messenger, sent by Him to do it and then, when it is all done, and He shall reign forever and ever, even then, the Son, Himself, shall continue in that position in which He put Himself long, long ago, "that God may be all in all." Then will the whole universe, restored and brought back to its proper place, be ordered according to the eternal Covenant arrangement.

And the practical outcome of it all is this. I want you, beloved Friends, so to live as to be persuaded that it will be so one day, that God shall be all in all—that there shall come a time when we shall stand before the Throne of God, God in us all, and everything in us of God, when all His elect, all His redeemed, all to whom Christ is all, and all in whom Christ is, shall only know God as their All in All! God all in their very existence. God their all in every hymn. God their all in every pulsing of their joy. God their all in every hope. God their all in every memory. God all to them and God *in* all of them to the very fullest—all redeemed, all deliv-

ered from the power of sin, all quickened into the Divine and God-like life, all summed up in Christ, Christ comprehending them all—and then Christ Himself Head over all things to His Church, standing and giving unto God the Glory forever and ever, that the Father may be All in All.

I see no abdication of a throne here. I see not even a change of dispensation and I do not believe in any! But, as surely as God lives, our King lives, and our Priest still ministers before Him. And He shall still be King over His people, though still, as the Christ, in His infinite goodness, abiding as subject unto God, Himself, God forever and ever, and yet, in His complex Person, making the Father to be All in All. Looking forward to that glorious consummation, we can join again in the jubilant hymn we sang just now—

"Hallelujah!—hark! the sound,
From the center to the skies,
Wakes above, beneath, around,
All creation's harmonies!
See Jehovah's banner furled,
Sheathed His sword! He speaks—'tis done!
And the kingdoms of this world
Are the kingdoms of His Son.
He shall reign from pole to pole,
With illimitable sway.
He shall reign when, like a scroll,
Yonder heavens have passed away!
Then the end—beneath His rod,
Man's last enemy shall fall!
Hallelujah! Christ in God,
God in Christ is All in All."

Now let us begin at the beginning. This is very simple—"*Christ is all."* Then may the Spirit of God help us to go on to the next rung of the ladder—"Christ *is in all His people."* There is the difficulty! Is He in you, Beloved? Have you received Him by faith? Then comes the third step—this may be, at present, full of mystery, but we shall see it in brighter light, by-and-by—*God shall be all in all.* So shall He be to us even now! Amen and Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN *BOOK"—412*, 355, 813.

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GRACE AND GLORY
NO. 2502

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 31, 1897—
THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BELOVED
PREACHER'S ENTRANCE INTO "GLORY."**

DELIVERED BY C. H, SPURGEON,
**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, MAY 17, 1885.**

***"The LORD will give grace and glory."
Psalm 84:11.***

WHEREVER, in the Old Testament, you see the word, "LORD," in capital letters, it ought to be read, "JEHOVAH," SO our text really is, "JEHOVAH will give grace and glory."

Who else could give either grace or glory? But God is full of grace—His very name is Love—it is His Nature to freely dispense of His goodness to others. As it is according to the nature of the sun to shine, so it is according to the Nature of God to give good things to His creatures. In Him all fullness dwells—all grace and all glory are perpetually resident in Jehovah, the Infinite. What a mercy it is that we, poor empty sinners, have to do with a God of such fullness and of such goodness! If He were shorthanded with His love, what would become of us? If He had but little graciousness, if He had but little glory, then we great sinners must certainly perish. But since the Lord is a bottomless well of love and a topless mountain of grace, we may come to Him, and come freely, without any fear that either His grace or His glory will ever suffer any diminution.

Note again that the text says, "Jehovah will give grace and glory." Not only has He these wondrous blessings, but He has them that He may *give* them freely. If He were to keep them to Himself, He would be none the richer, and when He distributes them, He is none the poorer! The Lord does not *sell* grace or glory, He does not put them up to auction to those who can give something in return for them. God is a great Giver and a great Forgiver. He gives grace and glory without money, without price and without any merit in the receiver. The Lord *gives*—there is nothing freer than a gift and there can be nothing freer than that greatest of all the gifts of God, eternal life! That expression, "eternal life," sums up these two things—grace and glory. "The Lord will give grace and glory." It is His glory to give His grace and because of His graciousness, He gives glory!

Should not this Truth of God be a comfort to anyone here who is struggling against sin and who is crying, "How shall I ever get to Heaven?" This is the answer—"The Lord will give *grace and glory."* "But I am so unworthy." "The Lord *will give* grace and glory." "But I can offer Him no recompense." There is no need of any recompense, for, "the Lord will

give grace and glory." "But I cannot procure these by any effort of my own." You have not to procure them, for, "the Lord will *give grace and glory."* O you who are full of needs and empty of everything else, come and joyfully accept the free gift of God in Christ Jesus, for, according to the text, "the Lord will give grace and glory"!

There are just two things for me to talk about at this time—*the first gift* and *the last gift.* "The Lord will give grace." That is His first gift. "The Lord will give glory." That is His last gift. Glory never comes without grace coming first, but grace never comes without glory coming last—the two are bound together and, "what God has joined together, let not man put asunder." He never gave grace without giving glory and He never gave glory without *first* giving grace. You must have the two. They must go together—you must not attempt to tear this seamless coat—"The Lord will give grace and glory."

I. So we begin with THE FIRST GIFT—"The Lord will give grace."

And, first, let me say that *the Lord will give grace to all those who feel that they need it and confess their need.* God will not give Divine Grace to a man who boasts of his merits and who claims a reward as a debt. God will meet such a man on his own ground and deal with him on his own terms—and will give him only what he merits—and what he really deserves. And what will that be, Sirs? O you who are pharisaic and boastful of your own righteousness, listen to the answer to this question! Such a man's deserts will be shame and confusion of face forever! Remember what Jehovah says by His servant Isaiah, "Behold, all you that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks. Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks that you have kindled. This shall you have of My hand—you shall lie down in sorrow."

If you are willing to meet God on the ground of being undeserving and guilty, God will meet you on those terms and, so meeting you, He will come in robes of Divine Grace and say to you, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins." Claim anything as of a *right* and God will only give you what you have a right to claim! And that will be everlasting destruction from His Presence and from the glory of His power! But confess that you are guilty! Put the rope around your neck and stand ready for the death sentence to be executed! Acknowledge that you are an undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinner and appeal to the unmerited mercy of God—and you shall have grace freely given to you. Put yourself where grace can come to you, that is, in the place of the guilty, the worthless—in the place of those who merit Divine Wrath and deserve nothing better—and then God will meet you in mercy, and you will prove the truth of our text, "The Lord will give grace." Come, then, you black sinners, for "the Lord will give grace." Come, then, you worthless ones, for "the Lord will give grace."

Come, then, you graceless ones, for "the Lord will give grace." Do but be empty and He will fill you! Do but be naked and He will clothe you! Do but be hungry and He will feed you! Do but be spiritually bankrupt and he will deliver you from all your liabilities and enrich you with the boundless wealth of His grace! God cannot be gracious to a man who is not in need of Divine Grace—that were to insult Him—and until you take

the sinner's place, which is your right place, you do not stand where the free favor of God can come and deal with you. Let this Truth of God, stern as it is in some aspects, be an encouragement to confession of sin and to contrition before God, for, "the Lord will give grace" to those who need it and who confess that need.

"The Lord will give grace," that is to say, *He will give grace to those who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ.* No, He *has given grace to them already*. It has pleased the Father that in Christ should all fullness dwell and, therefore, fullness of Divine Grace abides in Christ. If you want Divine Grace, you must go to Jesus for it! As Pharaoh said to those who sought corn in Egypt, "Go to Joseph," so does God say to those who seek His mercy, "Go to Jesus—turn to the Crucified." He is that golden pipe through which the mercy of God flows to the guilty sons of men! Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? In other words, do you trust yourself wholly with Him? Then if you do, God has given you Divine Grace—you have salvation, you are a saved man, your sins are forgiven you—you are accepted in the Beloved. "By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." But that faith rests itself upon the completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Further, "The Lord will give grace," that is to say, *He will give more grace to those to whom He has given some grace.* "The Lord *will* give grace." "Oh" you say, "I have such a little grace!" Thank God that you have any. If you have only the gleam of a candle, thank God for that, and believe that you shall yet have a light like that of the seven-branched candlestick in the ancient Tabernacle! If you have had the first droppings of Divine Grace, keep on looking to Him who gave you those first drops, for there is a shower on the way! He who has grace enough to believe in Christ may say that he hears the sound of abundance of rain. 'He gives more grace." Do you not remember that Jesus has come, not only that we might have life, but that we might have it more abundantly? A little genuine grace ensures the death of all our sins and the life of all our graces! If you are brought into covenant with God by Christ Jesus, then all the Divine Grace that is in the Covenant and in the Covenant Head is yours and you may freely partake of it! If you have but a morsel of the dainties of Christ in your mouth, there stands One at the table who says to you, "Eat, O Friend. Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved!" If you are but His son, all that He has is yours and you shall, by-and-by, have, in conscious enjoyment, more Divine Grace than you have had as yet, for where He has given some grace, He delights to give more!

"The Lord will give grace," also means that *He will give it in the form in which it is needed.* "I am looking forward to a great trouble," says one. "The Lord will give grace." "I am about to undertake a very serious responsibility," says another. "The Lord will give grace." "I am getting very old," says a third, "and infirmities are creeping over me." "The Lord will give grace." 'Oh, but I am approaching the time of my death! I feel that I have received my death-wound." "The Lord will give grace." Whatever is to come upon a child of God, Divine Grace shall come with it. Therefore, Beloved, be not afraid, but remember those ancient promises, "Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will streng-

then you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness."

"The Lord will give grace," means, too, that *He will give Divine Grace when it is needed.* He will not give you any grace to go and show about, so that you may boastingly say, "See what a lot of grace I have!" I think I have heard some testimonies which appeared to imply that the Brother had his pockets full of gold and, as he put in his hand and rattled the coins, he seemed to say, "*See* what a rich man I am!" That is all wrong! God does not give us any grace to turn into diamond rings to wear on our fingers and to flash in the sunshine. He does not give us any grace that we may turn into best clothes to wear on Sundays that people may see what fine people we are. Grace is a thing which has to be used and the Lord who gives it means us to use it. Whenever God sharpens my scythe, I know that there is some grass for me to cut. If ever He hands me a sword, He seems, by that very action, to say to me, "Go and fight," and He does not give it to me that I may have it dangling between my legs to show what a man of war I am! When you need grace, you shall have grace.

One said in His heart just now, when we were singing that line—

"All needful grace will God bestow,"

"I am afraid I have not grace to die with." My dear Friend, you may not be going to die just yet. When you are to die, you shall have dying grace in dying moments! I have heard one say, "I am afraid I am not a child of God, for I could not preach like So-and-So, and I could not pray like So-and-So." But you shall have grace to do it when God calls you to it. Somebody, the other day, trying to excuse or justify war, said to me, "Did not God tell Joshua to go and kill the Canaanites?" I answered, "When God tells me to go and kill anybody, I will go and do it, but, until He does so, I will heed what our Lord said to Peter, 'Put up your sword into its place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.'" It is a blessed thing that God gives Divine Grace to men according to their requirements. You remember the promise to Asher, "Your shoes shall be iron and brass; and as your days, so shall your strength be"? That was said to men who had to go on a long journey, but you do not need iron shoes and brass shoes! If you had them given to you, as soon as you reached home you would kick them off and say, "Give me a pair of light slippers." And God will not give us grace just for show—He will give it to us as we need it! Therefore fall back on this blessed Word of God, "The Lord will give grace." As it is needed, so shall the grace be given.

Furthermore, we know from this precious text that *He will give us Divine Grace to a much larger degree when we are prepared to receive it.* Let none of us believe that we are yet all that we are to be, or all that we ought to be, or all that we may be. Brothers and Sisters, we have no conception of what, by the grace of God, a Christian may become. "I can do nothing," says one. That is true. Learn that lesson well! But there is another lesson, remember, to follow it—"I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." Do not always rest content with the A B C—go on to the rest of the letters of the alphabet. There is a higher life than some professors live and blessed is he who attains to it. You are a doub-

ter—I am sorry that is the case and I wish I could lead you out of Doubting Castle. But only the Lord can deliver you from that dreadful dungeon! You are a trembler, weak and feeble. Well, God be thanked that you are alive at all, but still, it would be better if you were to grow "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." And you may. You, who now, through lack of faith, wear sackcloth and ashes, may yet, as God's trustful children, put on the silken garments all bespangled with the jewels of His love! You sit today upon the dunghill, but God does not make dunghills for you—He means you to sit upon a throne, for He has made us kings and priests unto our God. Then why are we sitting on the dunghill? It is well to be even there when God places us there, but it is far better to rise from it and put on our beautiful garments and get to the top of Amana—and there hold sweet communion with Him who dwells on high! God bring us there by His grace! The promise still stands—"The Lord will give grace." You may have it—therefore desire it! Long for it, seek it, prize it—and you shall yet have it and praise God for it.

I think that the text further means that *the Lord will give grace until it melts into glory*. "The Lord will give grace *and* _____." You know that in some dissolving views, you have one picture on the sheet and then presently the operator begins to slide another over it—and the one melts into the other. That is how it is with the Believer. There is the earthly picture of grace and you can see slowly coming into it—creeping over it, not altogether concealing it, but gradually absorbing it—that blessed picture of glory! Glory is really nothing more than grace fully developed—and when Christians begin to get spiritually ripe—something of the sweetness of Heaven is seen in them even here below. Paul says to the Philippians that "our conversation is in Heaven." Not only our *citizenship*, which the word means, but I like our version, our, "conversation" is there, because our "citizenship" is there. The Lord gives His people the grace to live a heavenly life before they get to Heaven! He gives them the grace to taste the clusters of Eshcol before they enter the Promised Land! And He will continue to give grace till grace is consummated in glory. Do not be afraid of the glorious Doctrine of the saints' Final Preservation, but believe that He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ! He who puts His hand to this plow will never look back from it, but will plow a straight furrow right to the last end of the headland. If He has begun to bear our souls up toward Himself and His glory, He will never turn from His purpose, or slacken His hand until He has finished the work in righteousness. He who has commenced this building will never cease to work till the headstone is brought forth with shouts of "grace, grace unto it."

"The Lord will give grace and glory." Think of that, Sinner! Think of your one day being in Glory! If you are, today, in grace, you shall one day be in Glory, as surely as you are now in grace! If you are a poor wretched sinner, only fit to make fuel for the flames of Hell, yet, if you will come and accept the grace of God and trust in the precious blood of Christ, you shall one day strike your harp among the angels and the spirits of just men made perfect! You shall one day be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, before the Throne of God in Heaven! Does it not make

you laugh in your heart to think of it? It often makes me sing as I bless the Lord that I, too, shall be there among the blood-redeemed ones! And you, sorrowful Soul, ought to be merry of heart at the very thought that you shall yet partake with angels and glorified spirits of the bliss which God has prepared for them that love Him!

II. Now we come to THE LAST GIFT, upon which I shall say but little, yet, had I time, I could say much—"The Lord will give glory." He will give that glory to those to whom He has given His grace.

What does this word, "glory," mean? Ah, Friends, I shall not attempt to tell you all about it—it is too vast a subject for any mortal to handle. Here is sea room for the biggest man-of-war in our great King's navy! My little boat shall only do a little coasting around the edge of this boundless ocean. "Glory." What is that?

Well, first, it is *something for the soul of man.* This soul of ours, when it is glorified, will be made like to God. That image of God, which Adam had, shall be restored, only yet more brightly through our union with the Second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. The soul shall be made like unto the Spirit of God in true holiness and righteousness. The glory of the soul will lie much in its absolute perfection. Whatever a soul ought to be, whatever a soul *can be*—that our soul *shall be*—it shall be rid of all sin, all tendency to sin, all liability to sin, all possibility of sinning! Oh, this is, indeed, glory, to be perfectly pure!

I do not doubt, also, that the glorified soul will be greatly enlarged and all its powers much increased—its ability to know, its ability to understand, its ability to enjoy, its ability to love, its ability to serve. We shall not be merely this poor little seed that we now are, but we shall be developed into that glorious flower which God intends to make His people to be in the day of their manifestation! Our glory will also very much consist in happy communion with God, in a very near and dear fellowship with the Most High. We shall converse familiarly with angels and the spirits of the blessed. Far more, we shall converse with Jesus, our elder Brother, our Lover, our Husband! These words drop easily enough from my lips, but what their full meaning must be, who of us can, at present, conceive? An hour with Christ on earth is worth a king's ransom—have not some of us enjoyed, in ten minutes here below, so much bliss that we have remembered that ten minutes for ten years afterwards? When our blessed Lord has lifted the veil from His face and has also taken the scales off our poor blind eyes and brought us near to Him, we have been ravished with delight! And whether in the body or out of the body, we could not tell. This bliss, and more, we shall be able to endure forever. The sweet delirium of fellowship with Christ below has in it too much of strain for creatures in these mortal bodies often to bear, but, strip us of this house of clay and then we shall be able to drink in deep draughts at the wellhead itself! Draughts, which today would drown us, shall then only content us—and these draughts shall be ours forever and ever. This is glory for the soul!

But let it never be forgotten that as we are made up of *body and soul*, so *there will be also glory for the body.* Though this body may be, for a while, separated from our spirit unless the Lord shall speedily come, yet

it is an integral part of our manhood and it, too, is to be glorified. Many of the children of God seem to forget the resurrection of the body. They who are already in Heaven are not yet perfect, as there is only a part of them there at present. The day of their perfection will be when the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised, incorruptible, and we who are then alive and remain shall be changed! Then our bodies will be no more capable of grief and anguish. Better still, they will never become the messengers and the servants of sin, for even this poor flesh shall be purified from all taint and from all possibility of corruption! The body is sown in weakness—it shall be raised in power! As to what the power of the glorified body shall be, we will not indulge our imagination or attempt to guess, but it will be something extraordinary. There will be no lameness there, no failing sight, no gathering deafness, no infirmity of the flesh—you shall be clean delivered from all these imperfections and your body shall be raised in the image of your immortal Lord!

There will be no scars of age, no bald heads, no signs and tokens of the work of sin. That sin of your youth, which lies in your bones—you shall be clean delivered from it all, as though you had passed through a refiner's fire, for the grave shall be but a refining pot to the bodies of the saints—and they shall be raised like unto His glorious body who is their Covenant Head and Lord! When our entire manhood, spirit, soul and body shall be in Heaven, then will this promise be fulfilled, "The Lord will give glory."

"Glory" means, first, *recognition.* When Christ shall declare that He knows us and shall say to each one of us, "Well done, good and faithful servant." When He shall confess us before men when He comes in the glory of His Father, O Brothers and Sisters, when Christ shall call out His poor persecuted followers and, amidst such a scene as never was beheld before—when angels shall lean from the battlements of Heaven and a cloud of witnesses shall gather round about assembled men, when Christ shall say, "You were with Me in My humiliation, and I acknowledge you as My chosen, My beloved, My brethren—that will be "glory!" There is more glory in one word of recognition from the King of Kings than in all the Orders of the Garter, or of the Golden Fleece that kings are able to distribute among their loyal subjects!

Then the next meaning of the word, "glory," is *vision.* "Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty." With Job, each Believer can say, "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." Yes, we shall behold Christ in all the splendor of His final triumph! We shall see the Father and rejoice in all His infinite perfections! And we shall have fellowship with the Holy Spirit! The one God shall fill all our faculties. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love Him." Perhaps neither eye, nor ear, nor heart will be needed then—but our whole spirit shall drink in the beatific vision of the Glory of God.

The third meaning of the word, "glory," is *fruition.* What the fruition will be, I will tell you when I have been there! Long ago we learned that "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." Brothers and Sisters, we have enjoyed His Word. We have enjoyed His Day. We have enjoyed His Covenant. We have enjoyed His love. But what will it be to enjoy God, Himself, and to enjoy Him forever? The Psalmist spoke of "God, my exceeding joy," but that was for earth. It will be "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" to enjoy God forever! I had that text explained to me just lately during the week of the Conference. I was so happy, God was so gracious to me and to all the assembled Brothers, in answer to prayer, that I felt, each night when I got home and each morning when I woke, as if I was weighed down with a super-excess of joy! I said to myself, "I can guess, now, what is meant by a weight of glory."

It needs a strong man to stand under a weight of Divine Grace here below. It needs a robust constitution to bear the weight of Divine Love even here! It is almost enough to kill a man and one may as well die of excessive joy as of excessive grief—but what will it be when our souls are so enlarged and we are so strengthened that we can enjoy God *forever*? Five minutes in Heaven and then let me come back—but then, if I did come back, you know, I should have heard unspeakable words which it would not be lawful for a man to utter! As I have not been there, I cannot tell you of all the wondrous things that help to make up the glory of Heaven. And if I *had* been there, it might be unlawful for me to tell you, so I will not attempt to intrude upon that reserved ground! But what I have to say to you is, *Let us all go there and see for ourselves!*

"What is the way?" asks one. Jesus shows Himself before us and says, "*I am the way*. I am the way." You ask Him, "But are You sure of it?" "Yes," says Jesus, "for I am the Truth." "Oh, but Lord, how shall we traverse that way?" Jesus says, "I am the life." The first part of our text helps you on to the latter part, for the way of grace is the way to glory. O poor Sinner, that way is open to you! You need Divine Grace and you may have it, for, "the Lord will give grace." And He will give glory, too, and then what will you and I do? Why, we will give Him glory! When the sun shines on the moon, the moon shines back—and when the glory of God shines on us, then we shall glorify God. Meanwhile, as God is so gracious to us, let us act gratefully towards Him. You know that the word, "grace," sometimes signifies not only free favor, but also thanks. We often use the expression, "Let us say grace," when we mean to give thanks to God. So, here on earth, let us *think* grace, let us *live* grace, let us *sing* grace and then, when we get to Heaven, we will *live* glory, and *sing* glory, and all the glory shall be ascribed to Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood!

Now let us close by singing just this one verse—

"Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days!
It lays in Heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise."

Sing it to the tune, "Cranbrook." Sing it as you can sing when you praise the Lord with all your heart and soul!

EXPOSITION C. H. SPURGEON.
PSALM 84.
To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

It is thought, by some interpreters, that Gittith signifies the winepress. They must have been a very godly people who sang such songs as this in the time of the treading out of the grapes. Oh, that the day were come when the common places of our ordinary industries should be sanctified by Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs! Alas, at the winepress, men too often sing loose and lascivious songs—but these ancient people of God did not.

This Psalm is a song to the chief Musician and it is mainly concerning the house of God and the pilgrimage to it. Every sacred song should be sung at its best. We should call out the chief Musician in every hymn that is dedicated to the service of the Lord.

"To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah." I have often reminded you that these sons of Korah owed their continued existence to an act of special Sovereign Grace. Korah, Dathan and Abiram and all their company were swallowed up alive. They went down to the Pit because of their rebellion. But in the Book of Numbers we read, "Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not." Why they were spared, we cannot tell, but, ever after, they were made to be the singers of the sanctuary. They who are saved by Sovereign Grace are the most fit to praise the name of the Lord! The sons of Korah also became doorkeepers to the house of the Lord and hence, probably, is the allusion to a doorkeeper which we find in this Psalm.

Verse 1. *How amiable are Your tabernacles, O LORD of Hosts!* "How amiable"—how lovely "are Your tabernacles!" The Temple was not then built. The Lord's house was as yet only a tent, so that it is not the glory of *architecture* that makes the house to be lovely—the glory of it is the indwelling God. "How amiable are Your tabernacles!" That is to say, every part of it is lovely. The outer court, the inner court, the Holy of Holies, all the different parts in that ancient sacred shrine were lovely to the Psalmist's eye. He does not tell us how lovely they were. He leaves off with a note of exclamation, as if he could not measure with his golden rod this city of the great King. "'How lovely are Your tabernacles, O Jehovah of hosts'—lovely because they are Yours! They are our tabernacles if we gather in them, but they are Yours because You are there and, therefore, are they most lovely to our eyes."

2. *My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh cries out for the living God.* His soul longed until, as it were, it grew pale—for so the Hebrew may be rendered—it grew white with faintness in the intensity of his desire to get up to the courts where God was to be found. God is a King. His ancient tabernacle was one of His royal palaces, so David longed to be a courtier there, that he might dwell in the courts of Jehovah. When he says that his flesh cried out for the living God, he does not mean flesh in the sense in which Paul uses the term, for in that flesh there dwells no good thing, but the Psalmist means to express here the whole of his nature, "My soul, my heart, and my

flesh." The combination of his entire manhood—spirit, soul and body—was moved with such intense agony of desire that it must express itself and it could only express itself in a cry, "My heart and my flesh cries out for the living God." If it is so with you, my Brothers and Sisters, at this time, you shall have a feast of fat things! He who comes to God's table with a good appetite shall never go away unsatisfied. It is lack of desire which often hinders us from spiritual delight, but when the desire is set upon God, it shall be satisfied! I fear that we often come to the wells of salvation and yet get nothing because merely *coming to the wells* is nothing. We read in Isaiah, "With joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation." It is not the wells, but the *water* out of them which will refresh the weary one! Do not be content with being here, in your pew, in the midst of this great congregation—long after the living God, Himself, for He alone can refresh and revive your soul and spirit! Say, with David, *"My* heart and my flesh cries out for the living God."

3. *Yes, the sparrow has found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O LORD of Hosts, my King, and my God.* These little birds, so insignificant in themselves, were full of holy courage and, with sweet familiarity they came even into the sacred place. They hung upon the eaves of God's house—they even dared to make their nests there!—

"O make me like the sparrows blest,
To dwell but where I love!"

O my Lord, give me the privilege of the swallow—not only to dwell with You, but to see my young ones, too, all round Your altars, that I may find with You, my God, a nest where I may lay my young! Is not this your desire, my Brother, my Sister, to have God for yourself, and God for your boys, and God for your girls—to be, yourself, God's servant, and to have all your children His children, too? If so, God grant you the desire of your heart!

How sweetly does David address the Lord—"O Jehovah of Hosts, my King and my God!" The people of God are very fond of *mys*—they love possessive pronouns—"*my* King and *my* God." God is good, but what is another man's God to me if He is not mine? I must have Him for *my* King and *my* God, or else I shall not really long for Him, or cry out after Him, or delight in Him.

4. *Blessed are they that dwell in Your house: they will be still praising You.* The nearer to God you are in your life, the sweeter and more constant will be your song to Him. They who dwell with God dwell where there must be singing—

"Where God does dwell, sure Heaven is there,
And singing there must be.
Since, Lord, Your Presence makes my Heaven,
Whom should I sing to but Thee?"

Blessed are they who always dwell where You dwell, O my God! "They will be still praising You."

4. *Selah.* Tighten the harp strings, set the music to a higher key! Lift up the heart! Also let the soul rise to something still sweeter in praise of Jehovah!

5. *Blessed is the man whose strength is in You; in whose heart are the ways*—Or, "Your ways." It is not every man who is in God's house who is blessed. The blessed man is the one who has brought his heart with him. It is not every man who is in God's ways who is blessed—but the man whose strength is in those ways, who throws his whole heart and soul into the worship. Half-hearted worship is dreary work. It is like a blind horse going round in a mill. But when the heart is in the service, we feel, then, as if we could dance for joy in the Presence of the Lord our God—"Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, in whose heart are Your ways."

6, 7. *Who passing through the valley of Baca makes it a well; the rain also fills the pools. They go from strength to strength. Everyone of them in Zion appears before God.* We do not know, at this date, what that valley of Baca was, for the land has been, to a large extent, destroyed. This ancient song retains the name of the valley of Baca, but it does not explain to us where or what the place was. Perhaps it was a dry and thirsty valley in which, in order to pass through it at all, the pilgrims dug wells that there might be refreshment for their journey. There are many such valleys on the road to Heaven—dark and lonesome, dry and barren—but God's people learn to dig wells there. Only mark that though we dig the wells, the water to fill them does not rise up from the bottom—it falls down from above. "The rain also fills the pools." In the Kingdom of Heaven there are some analogies with the kingdom of nature, but there are a great many heavenly things that have no earthly analogy at all. And you cannot with any accuracy argue from natural laws into the spiritual world. For instance, we have "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast," and we throw that anchor *up*—"which enters into that within the veil." Whereas earthly mariners *drop* their anchors down into the sea, we fling ours up into Heaven. That is odd, but it is true. So, we dig a well, but it does not get filled from the bottom—"The rain also fills the pools." This is a new kind of well and it teaches us that we *must use the means*, but that everything depends upon God! We have not to depend upon the means, but upon the God of the means—"The rain also fills the pools."

See, further, Brothers and Sisters, what the way to Heaven is. It is a growing way, an increasing way—"They go from strength to strength." Those who begin in their own strength go from weakness to weakness, but those who know their own weakness and trust in the Almighty God shall go from strength to strength! In the natural world, as we grow older, we get weaker—but in the moral and spiritual world, when it is as it should be—the older we grow, the stronger we become in God and in the power of His might! What a mercy it is to be on the road to Heaven, which is a road always upwards! From step to step, from hill to hill, from mount to mount, they climb who shall ultimately end their pilgrimage in the King's palace above. "Everyone of them in Zion appears before God."

8, 9. *O LORD God of Hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed.* See what a rise there is in the music, here, from, "Hear my prayer," to, "Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed." "When you cannot look on me, look on Your Anointed."—

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

When God looks at us, He may well be angry. But when He looks upon Christ, He must be glad and full of love.

10. *For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand.* That is, better than a thousand spent anywhere else. You see, we have not yet come to the country where we can stay at God's public worship all the year together—we have to get it a day at a time. Have you not often wished that there were seven Sundays in the week? I am sure that you have when God has fed your souls and made your spirits merry in the House of Prayer. Then have you sighed for the land—

"Where congregations never break up,
And Sabbaths have no end."

If you are a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall come there, by-and-by, but, at present, you must be satisfied with a day at a time in the courts of the Lord. Yet the Lord can crowd mercies into one day with such a marvelous compression of Divine Grace that we shall seem to get three years' food in a single day! The Lord make this day to be a sort of millennial day! "A day in Your courts is better than a thousand" spent anywhere else.

10. *I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.* As I said before, the sons of Korah were doorkeepers in the house of the Lord and this Psalm is for them. You know that our poor door-keepers generally have many to find fault with them—somebody or other is sure to feel disobliged. Door-keeping is no very remunerative work, no very easy and pleasing task. "Yet," says David—King David himself—"I would take off my crown of gold and turn pew-opener. I would wish to be even a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, so long as I might but be with my God. And that position would be far better than feasting and rioting in royal pavilions with the wicked."

11. *For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.* Take notice of the whole of that last sentence! Do not go and quote half of it and say, "God has promised that He will withhold no good thing." It is only promised to, "them that walk uprightly." And if you walk crookedly, the promise does not belong to you! It is upright walking that brings downright blessing! You shall lack no good thing from God when your whole heart is made good towards God.

12. *O LORD of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in You.* May all of us know this blessedness! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—84 (SONG II), 866, 875.

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

THE QUESTION BETWEEN THE PLAGUES
NO. 2503

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1897.
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"How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?"
Exodus 10:3.

PHARAOH is the type and image of proud men. God permitted him to be left to the natural hardness of his heart and he stood up against Jehovah in a very remarkable way. Those who are students of the ancient history of Egypt, those especially who have seen the remains of the colossal statues of the kings and those tremendous pyramids which probably were the places of their sepulture, will know that man worship was carried on to the very highest degree in connection with the ancient kingdom of Egypt. Our modern civilization has deprived kings of much of the dignity which once hedged them round. We have grown wonderfully familiar with our fellow men in the very highest places of the earth, but in those old monarchies, when the king was absolute and supreme, when his wish, even though he was little better than a maniac—was the law that governed the people—when not a dog dared move his tongue against the despot, then kings seemed to be like little gods and they lorded it over their subjects with a vengeance!

No doubt they grew intoxicated with the fumes of the incense which their subjects willingly offered to them and so came to think themselves almost, if not quite, Divine—and assumed the position and honors of God, Himself. It is not so very amazing, therefore, that Pharaoh should have thought that, in the God of the Hebrews, he had merely met with just another one of the same stamp as himself, against whom he could carry on war and whom he might even subdue. He said within himself, "Who are these Hebrews? Their fathers were a company of shepherds who came and settled in Egypt! And as for these people, they are my *slaves*. I have built cities with their unpaid labor and I mean to hold them in captivity. They talk about their God, their 'Jehovah.' Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice? Let it be a battle of Pharaoh against Jehovah and let it be fought out to the bitter end! I will show these people that I care not for them, or their Prophets, or their God."

That same pride which grew so strong in Pharaoh—growing upon that whereon it fed until it came to a colossal form—that same kind of pride is in the hearts of men even to this day! They do not take upon themselves the same high and mighty airs, but, as far as their circumstances will allow, it is still a duel between man and his Maker, between the sinner and his Judge. In the case of some here present, there is now going on a battle between yourselves and your God. Oh, that you would consider this

matter in the right light! That you would look at it with calm, steady and reasonable consideration, for then, I think, you would at once throw down your weapons and beg for peace on Gospel terms—and this would be the happiest hour that you have ever lived! God grant that it may be so! I am going to make a running application of my text all through my discourse, and I pray that the Holy Spirit, Himself, may make a direct application of it to anyone whom it may concern.

I. To aid your memory, let me say, first of all, that THIS QUESTION HAS ABOUT IT AN AIR OF ASTONISHMENT—"How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?" I have no doubt that as Moses and Aaron uttered this question, they put it in tones indicative of surprise—"How long is it to be that you, proud Pharaoh, will refuse to humble yourself before the only living and true God?"

And, surely, that astonishment must have arisen partly *from the judgments which God had inflicted upon Pharaoh.* You know what Jehovah had already done. He had turned the water into blood and destroyed the fish. He had made frogs to come even into the king's bedchamber. He had brought innumerable lice and flies throughout all the land. He had sent disease upon the cattle, boils and sores upon man and beast, storms of hail and rain and mighty thunder! With stroke after stroke, almost without a pause, Jehovah had smitten the proud king! Yet still, after seven plagues, Pharaoh stood out as proud and obstinate as ever and, therefore, the Lord sent to him the question of our text, "How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?"

I think I know some cases that are almost parallel with that of Pharaoh. Here is a man who has been very lofty and proud, but already he has been brought from wealth to poverty. At this moment he scarcely knows where to lay his head, yet in his poverty he has not turned to God. He has been smitten with sickness and that not merely once or twice, but many times. Turning over the pages of his diary he can note on such a day, fever—on such a day some other deadly disease—and these strokes have followed one after another. Yet, on being able to creep out again and to come into the place of public worship, he is still found as hardened in heart as ever he was. How long will it be, my Friend, before you humble yourself before God? The Prophet Isaiah might well ask concerning you the question he put in his day, "Why should you be stricken any more?" The rod seems to be wasted upon you—you have been struck till "the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint," and you are covered with "wounds, bruises and putrefying sores." Yet you turn not unto the God who smites you, but you grow prouder and yet prouder still notwithstanding all His chastisements and judgments!

What shall God do next with you? Where shall the next arrow be aimed? An eye, a hand, a foot—shall these be struck? Or shall the Lord lay the cold hand of death upon your heart? Shall "the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern"? I cannot tell how or when the summons may come for you, but I would very earnestly say to any of you who have been the subjects of many Providential trials and Divine

judgments, "How long will it be before you humble yourselves before God?"

The question of our text may have been put in astonishment from another point of view, namely, *because of the many false pretences of humility which Pharaoh had made*. When he was struck, he sent for Moses and Aaron again and again, and he cried out to them, "I have sinned, pray for me. Forgive me just this once." Then, when his prayer had been heard and the plague had been removed, Pharaoh went back to his old natural hardness and said, "I will not let the people go." Therefore the Lord sent to him the question, "How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?" Is it not much the same with some of you, my Hearers? I want to speak right home to your hearts and consciences! Have you ever, in the time of your sickness, promised God that if you should get better, your life should be altogether different? Yet, though the Lord spared you, there has not been any true change in you! Did you not say, "Please God, if I am delivered this time, I will be a better man in all respects"? Yet you are not any better than you used to be! Remember that those resolves of yours are all preserved upon God's file in Heaven—you have the counterfoils of those resolutions in your memory, but the resolutions, themselves, are registered in the Court of King's Bench above! And one of these days you shall see those broken resolutions again and, as you hear them read, you shall have to answer for having acted falsely towards the Omniscient God and for having lied to Him! God deliver you from the great sin of thus mocking Him!

Meanwhile, I press this question upon the heart and conscience of any to whom it applies, "How long will it be before you humble yourselves before the Lord? Will you go on all your lifetime with the mimicry of repentance, with the mere *pretense* of faith? Will you always be trying to play fast and loose with God? Will you never shake yourselves clear of this shameful play-acting and come to downright earnest repentance before your God? Will you play yourselves into Hell? Will you go on sporting with eternal realities as if they were only a child's game?" Oh, let it not be so! Let this question of the Lord, Himself, come rolling, like a peal of thunder, into your heart and conscience, "How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?"

Do you not think, too, that this question came from Moses with surprise as remembered the many mercies of God to Pharaoh? God had heard the prayers of Moses on behalf of Pharaoh. The proud king might think it a little matter, but he who had prayed for him and obtained the answer to his petitions did not think it a small thing. When the frogs were in all the land—only by the prayer of Moses were they all slain! When the swarms of flies came and defiled the whole country, it was the prayer of Moses that removed the plague so that there remained not one! It might be a little matter to Pharaoh—for men who receive favors often think but little of them—but they who win favors from God by prayer always highly esteem them! So Moses seems to be astonished as he says to Pharaoh, "Has God done all this for you? Has He removed His rod from you? Has He said to the executioner, 'Put back the axe'? Has He fetched you out of the prison of His judgments, taken the chains off your wrists

and set you free—and do you still stand out against Him? How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Him?"

Let me put this question to some who are here. God has been very gracious to you, my Friend, in delivering you from many accidents and diseases—and you are spared till your hair is turning gray. It would have been easy enough for your life to have come to an end long ago, yet here you are, still spared by God's mercy! You are not a pauper, as you once thought you would be. You are still living in comfortable circumstances and that great trial which, at one time, darkened your life like a heavy cloud, has passed away. And you can now look up with a cheerful countenance and remember times of great despondency and threatened distress. Will you not, then—won by this mercy, subdued by this great love—humble yourself before your God? What more can He do for you than He has already done? See how He has made you the special objective of singular Providential care! I refer you to your diary and ask you to remember how kindly and tenderly and graciously God has dealt with you these many years. O Sirs, if terrors will not move you, let *love subdue you*! Oh, that the Grace of God might find out the secret spring of your heart and bring you now, at once, to humble yourselves before the Lord!

So I think I am right in saying, in the first place, that there is an air of surprise about this question to Pharaoh, because of wasted judgments, forgotten promises and neglected mercies—"How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?"

II. Now, in the second place, to change the strain a little, and but a little, let me add that THE QUESTION BREATHES A SPIRIT OF KINDNESS.

You know that when a person does not intend another's good, he strikes the fatal blow at once without a word of warning. But he who is a father, though he must use the rod, speaks many times and pleads, and admonishes, and persuades before he gives a stroke. This is just what God did with Pharaoh by His servants Moses and Aaron. He said, "How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?"

In Pharaoh's case, that which God required of him was right. It was humbling to his pride, but it was right. What right had Pharaoh to hold the Israelites as his slaves? They were not his people—they had been admitted into the kingdom as honored guests. One of that race had saved the nation in the time of famine. Joseph had preserved Egypt and made the king strong in the midst of his people. Gratitude to Joseph ought to have caused the Israelites to be treated in a very different way. At any rate, if Pharaoh did not wish to have them in Egypt, he ought, at least, to have permitted them to go in peace and not to have held them in bondage. This was all that God asked of him—"Let My people go. They are none of yours, they are Mine. Let them go that they may serve Me."

And, Brothers and Sisters, that which God requires of a sinner is a right thing. He bids you leave your sin. Is not that right? He bids you break off your sins by righteousness. Is not that right? He has provided a way of salvation through the Atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ, and He bids you accept it. Is not that right? All that He asks you to do is to confess and forsake your sin. Is not that right? If you cannot undo your sin,

the least you can do is to acknowledge it like a man—and that is what God asks of you. He bids you trust His dear Son. Is that a hard thing, an unreasonable thing? If He has appointed a Savior and equipped Him for the service of salvation, and has bid you, who *need* salvation, to trust Him to save you and never think of self-salvation, but to take Jesus Christ to be the beginning and the end of salvation to you—is not that a right thing? Well, then, how long will it be that you will still refuse to humble yourself before Him? A right-minded man never desires to postpone a right action! If it is just and right, He wishes to let it be done at once. And, oh, dear Friends, it is the most just and right thing that can be conceived of, that a sinner, guilty against the God of Love, should confess his guilt, seek mercy and accept pardon in the way in which God provides it for men!

This question is put in a spirit of kindness and I desire to put it very kindly to any one of you who has not yet yielded to the Lord—"How long will you refuse to humble yourself before God?" Dear Friend, you say that you intend, one day, to humble yourself beneath the mighty hand of God. Do you think it will grow any easier while you delay? Is it difficult, now, to yield yourself to the Lord? It will be more difficult in a year's time, even if you are spared till then, for a man's habits harden every day that he lives! They spin new webs about him. They hold him fast, poor fly that he is, every hour that he lives. If it ever is an easy matter to bow before the Lord, it is easier at this moment than it will be tomorrow. Say not, therefore, "I am waiting for a more convenient season," for the most convenient season that ever can come is now! There will be greater inconveniences tomorrow than there are tonight—and so will it be *ad infinitum!* If you would be free from your bondage, break loose at once! You have waited too long, already, and you do not find it easier from day to day, neither will you if you still delay to submit to the Lord. Therefore, yield to Him at once. God help you to do so!

Do you not know that if God means to save you, *He will send heavier plagues upon you than any you have felt as yet*? If you will not come to Him with one blow, you shall have two! And if two will not suffice, you shall have twenty, for He *will have you*. It would be better to yield at once! There is no greater wisdom than the moment the Lord says, "Seek you My face," to answer, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding," which must be driven to their work and goaded on in their labor. There are some who come to Christ like vessels towed into port, all but wrecked, with torn sails and broken timbers. It is better by far that you be gently wafted into the haven by the soft south wind of Love, or that you spread your canvas to a favoring gale and fly before the breeze into the Fair Havens of salvation by Christ! I would put it to you, dear Friend—Why do you want to be beaten, bruised, cut and wounded? Why not, as you are, say tonight—

"Just as I am—without one plea
But that Your blood was shed for me,
And that You bid me come to You,
O Lamb of God, I come"?

At any rate, there is one other thing I will say to you—*a time for decision should be set*. I would like to press the question of the text, "How

long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?" I remember a man of God who was talking with a young lady to whom he had spoken many times about her soul. At last he said to her, "Well, Hannah, you do intend to come to Christ one day?" "Yes, Sir," she replied, "I do intend." "Well, now," he said, "will you give me a date when you will come to Christ? You are 20 now, will you come to the Lord Jesus Christ when you are thirty? Will you put that down as a definite promise?" The young lady answered, "Well, Sir, I should not like to promise that because I might be dead before I was thirty. Ten years is a long time and I might be dead and gone before that time. I hope I shall know the Lord before that." "Well, Hannah," the good man said, "we will say nine years, then. That is to be the time that you fix when you will yield to the mercy of God." "Well, Sir," she said, "I hope it will be before then." "No," he said, "the bargain is made—you will have to run risks for nine years, you know. You make the bargain that you will come to Christ in nine years' time. Let it stand so and you must run the risk."

"Oh, Sir!" she exclaimed, "it would be an awful thing, a dreadful thing, for me to say that I would wait nine years, because I might be lost in that time." The friend then said, "Well, suppose we say that you will serve the Lord in 12 months' time? Will you just take this year and spend it in the service of Satan, and then, when you have enjoyed yourself that way, give your heart to Christ?" Somehow, the young woman felt that it was a long time and a very dangerous time, so she answered, "I should not like to be hung over an awful chasm and for somebody to say, 'I will pull you up at the end of a year and set your feet on a rock.'" No, she could not bear that thought! And as her minister pressed her to set a time and brought it down by little and little, at last she said, "Oh, Sir, it had better be tonight! It had better be tonight! Pray to God that I may now give my heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, for it is such a dreadful thing to be without a Savior! I would have Christ as my Lord this very night." So I put it to you—yield to Christ at once and do not keep on saying, "I hope it will not be long before I become a child of God."

You know how people often talk when they owe you money—they promise to pay you "next Monday." Then, when the next Monday comes, they say that, unfortunately, there was a remittance which they fully expected on the Saturday, but it did not come. They feel quite certain it will come on Wednesday morning, so they will be round at your house with it, or, would you mind calling upon them at noon on Wednesday? When you call on Wednesday, they are so sorry—such a thing never happened to them before, but they lost a purse when they were out in the street, so could you allow them another month's credit? That is how they go on, until at last you say, "Well now, look here, will you tell me once and for all when you will pay me? Do fix a day." And you think you have done something when you get a day for payment fixed at last. So shall I think that there is something gained—though, mark you, I have not much confidence in such an arrangement—if there is a deliberate attempt made to fix some kind of time when you will yield yourself to Christ! And, of all the times that I can think of—if I may, for once, be your solicitor and sit down quietly and give you my best advice—my experience suggests to me

that I had better quote to you this passage of Scripture, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Today is in your power, it is here at present! It has almost gone, flying with the setting sun, but you have today at present—therefore use it, for tomorrow is not yours, and tomorrow may never come for you!

The question of our text is asked, then, not only with an air of surprise, but also with a great measure of kindness. And in that kindly spirit I wish you to suppose that I am walking round the front of this lower gallery and shaking hands with every unconverted person and asking, "How long will it be before you trust in Jesus?" And then, mounting the stairs to get to you who are in the upper gallery, that I may put to you the same question. And, after making the round of the whole building, threading my way as best I can through these crowded aisles and taking each one by the hand, giving a hearty grip, and saying, "How long is it to be? How long is it to be?" And, "Had it not better be now?" God grant that it may be now that you will humble yourself before the Lord, for Jesus' sake!

III. In the third place I will deal with the text in rather a different style, yet still keeping to the same objective though I change the line of argument. THIS QUESTION IS ASKED IN A TONE OF POWER.

If I could speak it as Jehovah would speak it by His servant Moses, I think it would run like this—"Thus says Jehovah, God of the Hebrews, How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go that they may serve Me." God as God says to Pharaoh, "*It is no use for you to stand out against Me*. As well might a moth contend with the furnace. It is of no use for you to lift your puny hand against Me. You know not how great My power is. I have given you a taste of it, but I have yet more terrible plagues in the rear which I will bring forward—and you will have to bow before Me." And you know, Brothers and Sisters, how Pharaoh *did* at last have to bow before Jehovah! The firstborn of his strength was cut off in the dead of night and there was wailing in the palace and in all the land. And then, when Pharaoh said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil. My lust shall be satisfied upon them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them"—he dashed forward to pursue the hosts of the Lord and you know what followed. "For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them." Then was heard the song of Miriam, "Sing you to Jehovah, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." As the rushing waters bore him away, proud Pharaoh learned when, too late, how great a fool he had been to contend against the Infinite Majesty of Almighty God!

And I say to you, Brothers and Sisters, who are fighting against God, *you must either bend or break*! As God lives, you must bow before Him in repentance, or you shall be crushed beneath Him in the day of His anger! Think not, when we talk to you of God's mercy, that we come to you as your equal might come, and reason with you as though God were afraid of you! Do you talk of your great strength? He is almighty! As for you, your breath is in your nostrils and the Lord could cause you, in a mo-

ment, to fall dead in a fit, as many have done before you! If you will not yield to Him, He is infinitely glorious without you! And if you rebel against Him, in what way can you affect the supremacy of His empire? As well might a drop of spray hope to shake the cliffs of Albion as for you to contend against the Majesty of God!

O Brothers and Sisters, fight not against your God! What profit can there be to you in this rebellion? Already you have found no profit in it. Therefore be not so mad as to continue warring against your God. "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." He is a God ready to forgive! "He delights in mercy." He wills not the death of any, but that they turn to Him and live. Still, if you will persist in contending against Him, see what your end will be—"Everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." Jesus Himself put the final issue thus, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

IV. I conclude my sermon by trying to show that THE QUESTION OF OUR TEXT IS OF WIDE APPLICATION.

Let me try to put the case to you who are here present. Forget Pharaoh and only think of yourself. Let the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, with the thorn-crowned head and the pierced hands stand by your pew and, looking right down into your soul, say in His matchless tone of music—the music of the heart of love—"How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?"

What is your difficulty, dear Friend? What is the cause of your quarrel with your Lord? *Do you even refuse to think about religion*? I know that many do. They get up late on Sunday morning and loiter about the house all day, with no care to go to what they call these "preaching-shops." They would rather go for a walk. The Bible is never read by them—they say that it is such a dreary book—which shows how unacquainted they are with its contents. Religion they regard as a mere make-up of priests, though they have never fairly examined its claims. Well, Friend, will you not at least give the Gospel a hearing before you condemn it? Will you not listen to God's message of salvation that you may form a sober judgment concerning it? Will you not, at any rate, read that Book which you have hitherto despised, that you may find out whether it really is the Book of God? Oh, no, you know too much to read the Bible! You are far too cultured to listen to the common preaching of such poor folk as we are. That is how you talk, but are you not ashamed to speak so? Do you not, yourself, judge that when a man thinks he knows everything, he really knows very little? And that when he affects to be such a very superior person, he is not so high and mighty as he thinks himself to be? Humble yourself enough, at least, to be wise? Humble yourself enough to listen to this question of Nicodemus, "Does our law judge any man before it hears him and know what he does?" Hear the story of Christ and examine and weigh the evidence of His Messiahship. Consider the claims of Christ and confess that you have not met them. And then give your whole heart and soul to seek to know the way of salvation!

But, suppose you have thought of religion, what is your trouble? You say, "Well, I understand that *I cannot be saved except by confessing myself a sinner*." You would not need salvation, would you, if you were not a sinner? Surely, there is no hardship in refusing to you what you profess you do not need! If I opened a doctor's shop and posted in the window a notice stating that I would give away no pills or draughts to men who were perfectly well, nobody would accuse me of a lack of humanity because I acted like that. Those who are well have no need of a physician! So, to qualify yourself for being saved, you must first confess that you need to be saved! Come, Friend, have you always been perfect? I should like to see you stand in the middle of the congregation and let us all look you up and down! If you did not blush, I should know that you were not perfect—and if you did blush, it would be a confession that you were imperfect! We have all transgressed the Law of our God. Some in one way and some in another, but, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and we must confess that it is even so. When we have done this, then will be fulfilled to us the ancient promise, "Whoso confesses and forsakes his sins shall have mercy."

If you have made a confession of sin, what is further the matter with you? "Why," you say, "I am told that *I must be saved by Divine Grace*." Yes, and how else would you like to be saved? Do you wish to be saved by your own merits? You have not any! You would like to set up some merit of your own, but why try to set up a lie? God is the God of Truth and He cannot endure that which is false. If ever any of us gets to Heaven, it will be by the free and undeserved mercy of God—why should you quarrel with such terms as these? When a thing is to be given away for nothing, I would be the last man to try to run it up in price! The richest man can have it for nothing and that is a price which exactly suits the poorest. Blessed be God that salvation is all of Grace from first to last! Humble yourself to accept it "without money and without price."

"But I understand," says one, "that *I am to be saved simply by believing in Christ*, and I do not like that way of salvation." Why do you not like it? Salvation by the atoning Sacrifice of Christ, through the sinner simply trusting in Christ, will greatly glorify Him. This makes the way of salvation possible to lame feet, blind eyes, deaf ears and enables poor guilty souls to find perfect righteousness which they could never find in any other way! Humble yourself, therefore, and submit to God's plan of salvation! Really, it seems to me that if a man gives anything away, he has a right to give it in his own way. And if God gives salvation, surely He has the right to give it in His own style! And if He will give it to all who confess their need of it, and come and freely accept it because Christ has worked it out, who shall quarrel with such terms as these?

In closing, I would very affectionately press home this passage upon all whom it concerns. Listen to the Lord, Himself, as He puts to you this solemn question, "How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?" Here are many of us who, long ago, came to Jesus and humbled ourselves before Him, and we did not think it any degradation. I would sooner have some men to put their foot on my neck than I would have the best words of certain other men. One might be willing to sit still and

be abused by some men and then say, "It is a pleasure, even, to be noticed by such persons," while, if certain others were to praise you, you might ask as the philosopher did of old, "What have I been doing amiss that this wretch should speak well of me?"

Ah, poor Sinner! If you once get a view of the Lord Jesus Christ and know who He is, and what He is—if you can, by faith, perceive His beauties, you will say, "To fall at His feet is a high privilege! To submit myself to such an One as Jesus Christ of Nazareth is a higher honor than to receive a peerage from an earthly sovereign." Therefore, let us go together—you who never went and some of us who have often been—let us go together and let us cry to Christ, "Lord, receive us! We are nothing but a mass of sin and misery! Receive us and save us, for Your mercy's sake, and unto Your name shall be the glory forever and ever!" Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EXODUS 10:1-20; PSALM 105:26-38.

Exodus 10:1, 2. *And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might show these My signs before him: and that you may tell in the ears of your son, and of your son's son, what things I have worked in Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them; that you may know how that I am the Lord.* God would stamp the early history of Israel with the deep impression of His Godhead. His overthrow of the proud Egyptian king should let Israel know in the very beginning how great a God had chosen her to be His own peculiar portion.

3. *And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me.* Can you imagine these humble individuals, Moses and Aaron, thus bearding the great king whose word could make their heads roll upon the ground? They were not afraid, for God was with them, and they who speak in God's place are traitors if they are not brave. The ambassadors of so great a King must not demean themselves by fear! Therefore right boldly said they to Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews, How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me."

4-6. *Else, if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow will I bring the locusts into your coast: and they shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth: and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remains unto you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which grows for you out of the field: and they shall fill your houses, and the houses of all your servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians; which neither your fathers, nor your fathers' fathers have seen since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day. And he turned himself, and went out from Pharaoh.* Moses had delivered his message. He had uttered his solemn warning, so he waited no longer in the tyrant's presence.

7. *And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God; know you not yet that Egypt is destroyed?* The seven former heavy judgments had so effectually bruised Egypt that the people began to cry against their king for his obstinacy in still farther resisting God.

8, 9. *And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve the LORD your God: but who are they that shall go? And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the LORD.* Pharaoh was inclined to make terms with Moses, but God will have no conditions with men who are rebelling against Him! An unconditional surrender is all that God will accept.

10, 11. *And he said unto them, Let the LORD be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. Not so: go now you that are men, and serve the LORD; for that you did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.* See how proud, how stout-hearted towards evil is this wicked and foolish king! When his people appeal to him to yield, he only does so for a moment, and then he drives out the messengers of God in anger.

12-17. *And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail has left. And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray you, my sin only this once, and entreat the LORD your God, that He may take away from me this death only.* See how he is obliged to come to his knees at last? He will be soon up again, for his heart is not humbled, though he is eating his own words! An unhumbled heart is not subdued by judgments—it is apparently so—but really it is still a heart of stone.

18-20. *And he went out from Pharaoh, and entreated the LORD. And the LORD turned a mighty strong west wind which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red Sea. There remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt. But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go.* God kept His Divine Grace back from him, so that he relapsed into his natural state of obduracy. Pharaoh is the great mirror of pride and obstinacy! I wonder whether we have a Pharaoh here? Now let us turn to the 105th Psalm and see further what God did against this proud Pharaoh.

Psalm 105:26-28. *He sent Moses, His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen. They showed His signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against His Word.* So cowed were they by that awful darkness, that for a time they seemed to repent of their rebellion against the Lord.

29, 30. *He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish. Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings.* Though the fish could not live, the frogs could. When good was taken away, evil came. What a strange succession of miracles was this—the fish slain, but the frogs multiplied!

31-34. *He spoke, and there came divers sorts of flies, and lice in all their coasts. He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. He smote their vines, also, and their fig trees; and broke the trees of their coasts. He spoke, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number.* There is great sublimity in this expression. God had only to speak and whole battalions of devouring locusts and caterpillars seemed to leap out of the earth, or to drop from the clouds—"He spoke, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number."

35-37. *And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground. He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength. He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.* It was a notable miracle that, after all the oppression they had endured, they should be in such a state of health that "there was not one feeble person among their tribes." When God makes His people march, He puts them into marching trim!

38. *Egypt was glad when they departed: for the fear of them fell upon them. Yet this was the mighty nation whose proud king had defied the Lord! At last they had had enough of the combat; they were glad that the people of God should retire out of their land and they themselves bowed low before Him.* May we be taught humility of heart, so that we can sing the hymn I have chosen!—

"Sovereign Ruler, Lord of all,
Prostrate at Your feet I fall.
Hear, oh, hear my earnest cry!
Frown not, lest I faint and die!"

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—605, 597, 596.

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JONAH'S OBJECT-LESSONS
NO. 2504

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"And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceedingly glad for the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live."
Jonah 4:6-8.

I WANT to lay the stress especially upon these three sentences in my text—

"God prepared a gourd."

"God prepared a worm."

"God prepared a vehement east wind."

The life of Jonah cannot be written without God. Take God out of the Prophet's history and there is no history to write. This is equally true of each one of us. Apart from God, there is no life, nor thought, nor act, nor career of any man, however lowly or however high. Leave out God and you cannot write the story of anyone's life. If you attempt it, it will be so ill-written that it shall be clearly perceived that you have tried to make bricks without straw and that you have sought to fashion a potter's vessel without clay. I believe that in a man's life the great secret of strength, holiness and righteousness is the acknowledgment of God. When a man has no fear of God before his eyes, there is no wonder that he should run to an excess of meanness and even to an excess of riot! In proportion as the thought of God dominates the mind, we may expect to find a life that shall be true and really worth living. But in proportion as we *forget* God, we shall play the fool. It is the fool who says in his heart, "No God," and it is the fool who lives and acts as if there were no God!

In Jonah's life, we meet with God continually. The Lord bade the Prophet go to Nineveh, but instead of going there, he took ship to go to Tarshish. Quick as thought, at the back of that announcement, we read, "But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken." God hurled out the wind as if He had been throwing a thunderbolt after His servant who was seeking to escape from Him—and there was such a terrible storm that the shipmen were compelled to cast Jonah overboard! Then we read, in the 17th verse of the first chapter, "The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish

three days and three nights." God began by preparing a storm, but he went on to prepare a fish! We do not know what fish it was and it does not matter—it was one that God made on purpose. And it answered so well that Jonah lived in the fish's belly for three days and three nights—and then he was landed safely—a better man than when he went into the sea, though none too good even then!

You may have found, dear Friend, that God has prepared a storm in your life. There was a tempest which checked you in your career of sin. You had determined to go to destruction and you had "paid the fare," but there came a great trial—something or other that stopped your ship and utterly threatened to swallow it up. After that, there came delivering mercy. You who were cast into the sea were, nevertheless, not lost, but saved. What you judged to be your destruction turned out to be for your salvation, for God had from of old prepared the means of saving you—and He sent you such a deliverance that you were compelled to say with Jonah, "Salvation is of the Lord." Since that time, I should not wonder if you have seen the hand of God in very many amazing ways, possibly in much the same form as Jonah did, not literally, but spiritually. Especially if you have erred as Jonah did, if you have fallen into ill-humors as he did, you have probably had to bear the same kind of discipline and chastisement.

Let it never be forgotten that Jonah was a man of God. I often hear great fault found with him and he richly deserves the condemnation. He was not at all an amiable person but, for all that, he was a man of God. When he was in the very depths of the sea—when he appeared to be cut off from all hope, he prayed as none but a man of God could pray—"Out of the belly of Hell cried I, and You heard my voice." It takes a real saint to cry out of such a place as Jonah was in—the living tomb of the belly of a fish! He was also a man of faith, otherwise he had not been a man of prayer. And he did believe in his God—it was the result of a mistake that was made by his *faith*, rather than by his unbelief, that he tried to run away! He had such regard for God's honor that he could not bear to exercise a ministry which he feared would raise a question about the truthfulness of God and represent Him to be changeable. So far as his idea of God went, he was faithful to it. His fault mainly lay in that imperfect idea of God which had taken possession of his mind.

Jonah was a man of faith and a man of prayer, and God honored him exceedingly by making his word to turn the whole city upside down! For my part, I hardly know of any other man who ever had so high an honor put upon him as this man had. It is just possible that if you or I had made a king on his throne to come down from it and robe himself in sackcloth. And if we had seen a whole city—men, women and children—all crying out for mercy as the result of one sermon from us, we might have been as greatly foolish, through the intoxication of pride, as this man was foolish through a vehement zeal for God which happened to take a harsh shape instead of being tempered, softened and sweetened by a recognition of the great love and kindness of God—and by a sweet delight in those gracious attributes of His Character!

Jonah was grandly stern amid a wicked generation. He was one of God's, "Ironsides." He was the man for a fierce fight and he would not

hold back his hand from the use of the sword, or do the work of the Lord half-heartedly. He was one who wished to make thorough work of anything he undertook and to go to the very end of it. We need more of such men, nowadays! He was not lacking in backbone, yet he was lacking in heart—in that respect we would not be like he. He was singularly strong where so many in these days are grievously weak. Perhaps he is all the more criticized and condemned because that virtue which he possessed is so rare today. The faults he had were on that side on which most modern professors do not err and, therefore, Pharisee-like, they are content to condemn the man for that which they do not, themselves, commit because they are not brave enough and strong enough to fall into such a fault!

In my text we have God very conspicuous in the life of His servant Jonah and I want to bring out this truth very prominently, that we may also see God in *our* lives in similar points to those in which He manifested Himself to Jonah. So, we will notice, first, that *God is in our comforts*—"God prepared a gourd." Secondly, God is *in our bereavements and losses*—"God prepared a worm." Thirdly, God is *in our heaviest trials*—"God prepared a vehement east wind." Then, fourthly, what is not in the text in words, but is the very essence of it, *God prepared Jonah*—these three things—the gourd, the worm and the east wind were a part of his preparation, the means of making him a fitter and a better man for his Lord's service. He learned by the gourd, he learned by the worm and he learned by the vehement east wind. They were a sort of kindergarten to which the child-like spirit of Jonah had to go. He needed to be taught as children in their infancy are taught by object-lessons and things that they can see. So Jonah went to God's kindergarten, to learn from the gourd, the worm and the east wind the lessons that he would not learn in any other way.

I. So, first, I remind you that GOD IS IN OUR COMFORTS—"God prepared a gourd." Everything of good that we enjoy, however little it may be, comes from God—

"'Tis God that lifts our comforts high,
Or sinks them in the grave.
He gives and blessed be His name!
He takes but what He gave."

Let me call your attention to Jonah's comfort, that is, the gourd which God prepared. It was sent to him when he was in a very wrong spirit, angry with God and angry with his fellow men. He had hidden away from everybody in that bit of a shanty which he had put up for himself outside the city, as if he was a real Timon, the man-hater. Sick of everybody and sick, even, of himself, he gets away into this little booth and there, in discontent and discomfort, he sits watching to see the fate of the city lying below the hill. Yet God comforted him by preparing a gourd to be "a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief." You know that we are very apt to say of some people, "Well, really, they are of such a trying disposition. They fret about nothing at all and they worry themselves when they have no cause for it. We have no patience with them."

That is what *you* say, but that is not how God acts! He has pity upon such people and He has had patience with many of you when you have

been of the number of such people. Why, I do not believe that any man here would have proposed to make a gourd grow up to cover the head of the angry Prophet—we would much more likely have called a committee meeting and we would have agreed that if the discontented Brother liked to go and live in a booth, he had better work the experiment out. It would probably be for his good and make him come back and live in the city, properly, like other people! Though he was left to feel the cold by night and the heat by day, it was entirely his own choice—and if a person chooses such a residence, it is not for us to interfere! That is how men talk and men are so exceedingly wise, you know. But that is not how *God* talks and He is infinitely wiser than any of His creatures! His wisdom is sweetly loving, but ours sometimes curdles into hardness. What do you think, Brothers and Sisters, has not God sent us many comforts when we did not deserve them? When, on the contrary, we had made a rod for our own back and might well have reckoned upon being made to smart? Yet God has sent us comforts which have relieved us of the sorrow which we foolishly brought upon ourselves—and made us stop the fretfulness which was our own voluntary choice. God has been wonderfully tender with us, even as a mother is with her sick child. Have you not found it so, Brothers and Sisters? Well, now, look back upon your past life and think that all the comforts which came to you when you deserved to be left without them, came from God, and for them all let His name be blessed!

Further, notice that the comfort which came to Jonah was exactly what he needed. It was a gourd, a broad-leaved plant, very probably the castor-oil plant, which botanists call Palma Christi, because of its resemblance to the human hand. In its native country, it grows very rapidly, so that it would speedily afford a welcome shade from the heat. Whatever kind of gourd it was, God prepared the plant, and it was exactly the kind to shield Jonah from the burning heat of the sun. The Lord always knows how to send us the very comfort that we most require. There is many a mother who has had only one of her children spared to her, but what a comfort that one child has been! I have heard one good woman say, "My dear daughter is such a joy to me, she is everything I could wish." Or it may be that God has sent to you some other form of earthly comfort which has been altogether invaluable to you—it has been a screen from the great heat of your trouble—"a shelter in the time of storm." Whenever you get such an invaluable blessing, praise God for it! Do not let your gourd become your *god*, but let your gourd *lead you to your God*. When our comforts become our idols, they work our ruin. But when they make us bless God for them, then they become messengers from God which help toward our growth in Divine Grace.

Note, next, that God sent this comfort to Jonah at the right time. It came just when he needed it—when he was most distressed. Then it was that the gourd came up in a night. The punctuality of God is very notable—

"He never is before His time,
He never is too late."

Just when we need a mercy and when the mercy is all the more a mercy because it is so timely, then it comes! If it had come later, it might have

been too late, or, at any rate, it would not have been so seasonable and, therefore, not so sweet. Who can know when is the right time like God who sees all things at a single glance? He knows when to give and when to take. In every godly life there is a set time for each event. And there is no need for us to ask, "Why is the white here and the black there? Why this gleam of sunlight and that roar of tempest? Why here a marriage and there a funeral? Why sometimes a harp and at other times a sackbut?" God knows, and it is a great blessing for us when we can leave it all in His hands. Let the gourd spring up in a night it will be the right night—and let the gourd die in the morning—it will be the right morning! All is well if it is in God's hands. Let us, therefore, distinctly recognize God in our comforts, in their coming to us when we are unworthy of them, in their coming in the form in which we most require them and in their coming at the time when we are most in need of them.

This gourd, like all our comforts, was sent to Jonah *with an exceedingly kind design*, and God made it to come up, "that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief." One would not have thought of a gourd delivering a man like that from his grief. It is an unmanly thing for a Prophet of Jehovah to have a grief from which a gourd can deliver him, but God knew His servant, and in condescension He sent this amazing form of comfort with this motive, "to deliver him from his grief." I think that Jonah, when he wrote this verse, must have smiled to himself and thought, "All through the ages, what a fool they will think I was!" Yet he went on and honestly put it down. So, often, when you and I have been comforted by some mere trifle and we have been very grateful for it, looking back upon it, we have thought to ourselves, "What poor creatures we were to have been comforted by so small a thing! How foolish it seems for us, first, to have been put out by so little a matter, and then to have been comforted by something equally little!" Let us see, here, God's wonderful kindness, His microscopic kindness in thus looking, as it were, to our thimble of grief, and somehow dealing with them after their own shape and form so as to deliver us from the grief they have caused us.

Yet, further, it seems *that this design of God was fully answered*, for, "Jonah was exceedingly glad of the gourd." God has often sent us mercies that have made us exceedingly glad and we have been delivered from the pressure of heavy grief. But here is the sad note in the history of Jonah, as it has often been with us, also—although he was exceedingly glad, he does not appear to have been exceedingly *grateful*. It is one thing to be glad of a mercy—it is another matter to be grateful *for* that mercy. Sometimes a man spends all his time in rejoicing over the comfort, which then becomes idolatry, whereas he ought to have expended it in blessing God for the comfort. And then it would have shown that he was in a right state of heart. I do not read that Jonah thanked God for this gourd. Possibly no worm would have devoured it if he had done so. Our comforts are always safest when they are enveloped in gratitude. Let us overlay the wood of our comfort with the gold plate of our gratitude—and so shall it be preserved. An ordinary comfort protected with a sheet of gratitude shall become to us a double means of Divine Grace.

This, then, is the first point at which I am aiming. I want every child of God—and I would that every man and woman and child here would do the same—to think of every comfort as having come from God. Even though it is a poor fading thing, like a gourd, yet it is valuable to you for the present. Therefore, think of it as having come to you from God, even as "the Lord God prepared a gourd" to deliver His servant, Jonah, from his grief. So, the Lord has prepared your comforts, prepared your prosperity, prepared your wife, prepared your children, prepared your friends! Therefore bow your heads in gratitude to Him and bless the name of the Lord whose mercy endures forever.

II. Now we turn to our second point, where we shall need even more faith than in the first part of our subject. The Prophet next says that "God prepared a worm," which teaches us that GOD IS IN OUR BEREAVEMENTS AND LOSSES.

Jonah's great comfort was destroyed by *a very little thing*. It was only a worm, but that was enough to destroy the gourd. Oh, how soon may our earthly comforts be taken away from us! There is a little fluctuation in the markets and the prosperous merchant becomes a bankrupt. A little red spot appears in the cheek of your fair child and in a few weeks she is taken away by decline or consumption. A very little thing may soon destroy all your comforts and make them to be like the withered leaves of Jonah's gourd.

It was also, probably, *an unseen thing* that worked this havoc. Very likely Jonah did not see that worm. God prepared it, but the Prophet did not discern it until he saw the destruction it had caused. And, my dear Friends, some little unseen thing may yet come to you and turn into grief all your present joy.

Besides, *it was a very foul thing*, a worm, a maggot at the root of this gourd—and through this foul thing it withered and died. It is sometimes the sharpest bitterness of our grief when we have our joy spoiled by somebody else's sin. The venomous whisper of a wicked gossip—a foul drop from the black tongue of slander has poisoned the very well-spring of domestic bliss! In Jonah's case, the Lord prepared the worm and although no evil thing can be charged against the good God, yet at the back of man's free will there is the great Truth of Divine Predestination, which, without taking any evil upon itself, yet overrules even the waywardness of man for the Lord's own Glory. People often think that there is no worm which can eat into their comfort, but God can prepare one, as He did in the case of the Prophet. He as much prepared the worm as He prepared the gourd. He as much destroyed the comfort as He first of all gave it to His sorrowing servant.

This worm, which God had prepared, *did its work very speedily*. The gourd was destroyed in a night. When Jonah fell asleep, there it was over his head, guarding him from the bright beams of the moon. But when he woke in the morning, it hung shriveled and worn out, affording no protection, whatever, from the fierce rays of the sun. Oh, how soon can God take away every atom of comfort that we have! I am never at a wedding but the thought of a funeral crosses my mind. I cannot help it. Neither do I hear the sound of joyous music, but I reflect how soon it will all be over and the trumpet of the great Day of Judgment will subdue all hearts with

fear. It is well, when you are glad, to rejoice as though you rejoiced not, for then you will learn, when you are sorrowful, to mourn as though you sorrowed not. Recollecting the vanity and frailty of all things here below, have yourself well in hand. Create your circumstances, rather than be the creature of them! Overrule them by faith instead of bowing before them in terror.

Further, when God prepared the worm to destroy Jonah's gourd, the *result of its work was very sad*. It left the poor man without that which had made him exceedingly glad and he was as angry and distressed as before he had been rejoicing! I want you, dear Friends, to pause here to learn this lesson. It is *God who sends your trials*—do not get into your head the notion that your sickness or anything else that grieves you is from the devil. He may have a finger in it, but he is, himself, always under the supremacy of God. When Job is vexed and plagued by Satan, the archenemy cannot touch him anywhere till God gives permission. God always stands at the back of all that happens. Therefore, do not begin kicking at the *secondary agent*. You know that if you strike a dog with a stick, he bites at the stick—if he were a sensible dog, he would try to bite you! If you quarrel with anything that happens, your quarrel is virtually with God Himself. It is no use to quarrel with the Lord's agent, for it is God, after all, who sends you the affliction—and "He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." Say, as old Eli did, when he heard the evil tidings concerning his household, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him." Let it be with you as it was with Aaron when, as he could not speak joyfully, he did not speak at all—"Aaron held his peace." It is sometimes a great thing to not be able to say anything. Silence is golden when it is the silence of a complete submission to the will of the Lord. God prepares the worm, therefore, be not angry with the poor worm, but just let the gourd go. It was God who made it grow and He had a perfect right to take it away when He pleased.

III. Now, thirdly, "God prepared a vehement east wind," which teaches us that GOD IS IN OUR HEAVIEST TRIALS. Jonah could not escape the fury of the wind, especially when his gourd was withered. This wind came from the east, which, according to our old proverb, is "neither good for man nor beast." But it came from the east *most vehemently* and, at the same time, after the protecting gourd was gone! The fierce rays of the sun beat upon Jonah's head, where he seems to have been weakest, though he probably thought himself to be strongest.

So, dear Friends, *God may send you troubles on the back of one another*. The gourd is gone. Now the east wind comes. Troubles seldom come alone—they usually fly in flocks, like martins—and it will often happen that one will come upon the back of another and you will say to yourself, "Why does this trial come just now when I am least able to bear it?"

Sometimes, also, *troubles come very fiercely*. It was "a vehement east wind." It came like the rush of scorching heat out of the open door of an oven. It was like the Sirocco, a sultry wind burning up everything in its track. This wind came with all its might upon poor Jonah—and just so may fierce and fiery trials come at any time upon the dearest servants of God.

And, once more, trouble may come *when we think ourselves secure*. When Jonah left the city, he seemed to say, "There, I will get away from men. I will not have anything more to do with them, they have always worried and troubled me. I will get quite alone and I shall sit and enjoy myself, for I cannot enjoy anybody else." But the troubles came even there! Indeed, Jonah had built his booth "on the east side of the city," just where he would be likely to feel the full force of the wind blowing from that quarter. In going there, he had not gone out of the realm of withered gourds, nor had he gone beyond the reach of the vehement east wind. Neither have you, dear Friend, though you say, "I thought, when I left my last trying situation, I would get into a comfortable place." Yes, I will tell you when you will get into a comfortable place, if you are a Christian, and that is when you pass out of this world altogether! And you will not find it anywhere else—go where you may on this globe—there are no islands upon which the sea does not sometimes beat roughly. There is no atmosphere so calm but the east wind will disturb it, sooner or later. You may go and sit in your booth if you like, but there shall come to you, even in that booth, the checks of comfort and of loss, of gourds which spring up in a night and which also wither in a night!

Yes, fierce troubles will come to us, and *they may bring us no benefit in themselves*. It is a popular notion that trials sanctify those who have to endure them. But, by themselves, they do not. It is a sanctified trial that sanctifies the tried one, but trial itself—alone and by itself—might make men even worse than they are. Here, for instance, is Jonah. His gourd is gone and the sun's fierce heat beats upon him and makes him faint. And even to the Lord, Himself, he says that he does well to be angry, even unto death. The trial was not sanctified to him while he was in it—and it often happens that "nevertheless afterward" is the time in which trials benefit us. "No chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." You may have ten thousand trials and yet be none the better for them unless you cry to God to sanctify every twig of the rod and to make the fury of the east wind or the burning rays of the sun to be a blessing to you!

It seems that, at the time, *this trial only revealed Jonah's folly*, for it appeared to make him pray very foolishly and talk very foolishly. His trials were like the tossing of the troubled sea whose waters cast up mire and dirt. This vehement east wind threw up great masses of black seaweed upon the shore of Jonah's character and made the great sea of his heart roll up the foul mass of corruption that otherwise might have been hidden and still. Brothers and Sisters, unless the Spirit of God comes upon us in power, we shall not grow holy through our trials! Though we were washed in a sea of fire, we would not lose an atom of our sin by suffering! No, the very flames of Hell shall never purify a soul, or purge away a single sin—he that is filthy shall even there be filthy. There is nothing in suffering, any more than there is in joy, in and of itself, to make a man holy!

That is the work of God and of God alone, yet God overrules both our joy and our grief to accomplish His own Divine purpose by His Spirit. It is God who sends the wind, so, once again, I want you to pause and bow

your heads before Him who sends all your trouble. Do not be angry with God for what He does to you, but feel that it must be right even though it should tear everything away from you, though it should leave you a widow and houseless, though it should strip you and though it should even slay you! God is still God and the deeper your trouble, the greater are your possibilities of adoration, for, when you are brought to the very lowest, it is then, *in extremis*, you can raise the song in excelsis! Out of the deepest depths you can praise the Lord to the very highest! When we glorify God out of the fires of fiercest tribulation, there is probably more true adoration of Him in that melody than in the loftiest songs of cherubim and seraphim when they enjoy God and sing out His praises in His Presence above!

IV. Now, lastly, I said that it was not verbally in the text, but it was there in spirit, that IN ALL THIS GOD WAS PREPARING HIS SERVANT.

Do you not see that *God was teaching Jonah by the eye and by experience*? Unless the Lord had put Jonah through this process, He could not so well have argued with His servant. So the gourd must go and the wind must come, and the sun must beat upon the fainting Prophet—and Jonah, in his angry temper, must get to feel great grief over his poor gourd which had met with such an untimely death. And then God comes to him and says, "Are you troubled about your gourd? Have you pity upon a gourd and should not I have pity upon a great city with more than a hundred and twenty thousand helpless children within its walls, and all those thousands of unsinning cattle? Should not I spare these, when you would have spared this tender plant which sprang up in a night and withered in a night?"

Sometimes God puts us through an unusual experience in order that we may the better understand Him. And sometimes that we may the better know ourselves! Men who are of a hard nature must have hard usage. Diamond must cut diamond, that at last the purpose of the great Owner of the jewels may be accomplished. Then, dear Heart, with your sore afflictions, God is preparing you to be a comforter to others! You distressed and troubled one, God is training you that you may be a very Barnabas, the son of consolation, to the sons and daughters of affliction in times to come. I would suggest to some of you here who have to bear double trouble that God may be preparing you for double usefulness, or He may be working out of you some unusual form of evil which might not be driven out of you unless His Holy Spirit had used these mysterious methods with you to teach you more fully His mind.

I am probably speaking to some who are not yet converted to God. You have not yet believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet you have a world of troubles. You think that God is so angry with you that He means to destroy you, for ever since you have begun to think of Divine things you have had nothing but trouble. You have lost one dear friend after another. You have, yourself, been very ill, and you often feel very low-spirited and sad, and you say to yourself, "Ah, I am doomed to perish!" Now, I do not come to that conclusion at all! On the contrary, I thank God for your trouble, for I think that, as God dealt with Jonah to teach him a lesson, He is dealing with you to bring you to Himself! It was a good thing for Jonah when he had finished that quarrel with his God, for

no good ever comes that way. What a blessed thing it would be for you, also, to finish your quarrel with God! Finish it soon, I beg you.

How can you be reconciled to Him? Only by the death of Jesus, for God has given His Son to die for sinners. That ought to end your quarrel with God. Remember that blessed verse, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Turn to Him, then. Let the God of Love end your discussions and end your questionings! May His blessed Spirit come and sanctify your troubles and bring you to Himself! God bless you all, dear Friends, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JONAH 4.

You know all about Jonah's refusal to go upon the Lord's errand and how he was held to it, and carried to his work in a great fish as he would not go by himself. Somehow or other God will make His servants do His will. And the more speedily they do it, the better it is for them. You know also how the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah and how the Lord had mercy upon them.

Verses 1-3. *But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray You, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before You unto Tarshish: for I knew that You are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and relents from doing harm. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech You, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.* "For, if I live, the Ninevites will say, 'This man scared us needlessly. He is a Prophet of evil and he is a liar, too, for our great city is not destroyed! He frightened us into a kind of repentance for which there was no necessity, for his God does not carry out His threats," and so forth. And poor Jonah could not face such talk as that. But, Brother, if you preach God's Word as He gives it to you, you have nothing to do with the consequences that come of it! God will justify His own Truth. And even if it should seem that the worst rather than the best consequences ensue, it is still for you to go on in the name of Him who sent you. Whenever you and I begin to try to manage God's Kingdom for Him, we find the Divine scepter too heavy for our little hands to hold. Our case would be like that of Phaeton trying to drive the horses in the chariot of the sun! We cannot hold the reins of the universe. And poor Jonah, wanting to manage everything for God, makes a dreadful mess of it and, in his anger, makes a very foolish request—"O Lord, take, I beseech You, my life from me."

4. *Then said the LORD, Is it right for you to be angry?* How kind of God to speak thus gently to His rebellious servant. Are any of you given to anger? Might not the Lord say to you, "Is it right for you to be angry, so soon—so often—so long—about such little things?"

5. *So Jonah went out of the city*—When, no doubt, everybody would have been willing to entertain him, for all, even to the king, must have felt a deep respect for the messenger who had brought them to their knees before the Lord. "Jonah went out of the city"—

5. *And sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.* To see those 40 days out—half hoping, perhaps, that there would come an earthquake to shake the city down and then, under his little booth of boughs, he would not be hurt by the falling edifices! In as sulky and surly a spirit as he could be, he put himself to great inconveniences. The dampness of the night fell on him and the heat of the sun would soon wither up the branches. If, dear Friends, like Jonah, you need to complain, you will soon have something to complain of! People who are resolved to fret, generally make for themselves causes for fretfulness.

6. *And the LORD God prepared a gourd and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceedingly glad for the gourd.* Those who are angry with God show the littleness of their minds. "Little things please little minds." So a gourd made Jonah glad.

7, 8. *But God prepared a worm, when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die*—Jonah was soon up and soon down. Yesterday he "was exceedingly glad for the gourd." Today he is fainting because of the heat of the sun! If we allow our mercies to become too sweet to us, they will soon become, by their withdrawal, too bitter for us. When we feel too much affection for the creature, we shall soon find a great deal of affliction *from* the creature. "The sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die"—

8, 9. *And said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Is it right for you to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.* He had got into such a bad spirit that he could even brave it out with his God! Oh, that we might be preserved from such an evil temper! It is well for us that, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." When a child is in a fever and says a great many naughty things, his father puts it down to the sickness rather than to the child. So it was with God's poor fainting servant, Jonah.

10, 11. *Then said the LORD, You have had pity on the gourd, for the which you have not labored, neither made it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh*—"Nineveh, for which I have labored. Nineveh, which I made to grow. Nineveh, which has been many years in the building. Nineveh, which contains multitudes of immortal souls which will not perish in a night—'Should not I spare Nineveh?'"

11. *That great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand.* This is always supposed to mean infants and I judge that the supposition is a correct one. So Nineveh had a population of over one hundred and twenty thousand who were under two years old. So it must have been an immense city. Who can tell the blessing that even infants bring to us? It may be that God spares London for the sake of the children in it. What a deal the Lord Jesus Christ made of children! He suffered the little chil-

dren to come to Him and forbade them not. Does God care for children? Yes, that He does—and so should His servants! They are the better part of the human race! There is more in them that is admirable than there is in us who are grown up. They are, in many respects, a blessing to the city, as these six-score thousand little ones were to Nineveh. But how amazingly does God add—

11. *And also much cattle?* Does God care for cattle? He does! And how that fact should teach His servants to be kind to all brute creatures! There is some truth in those lines of Coleridge—

"He prays best, who loves best
All things, both great and small,"

for everything that lives should be the object of our care for the sake of Him who gave them life. And if He has given us to have dominion over all sheep and oxen, and the birds of the air, and so forth, let not our dominion be that of a tyrant, but that of a kind and gentle prince who seeks the good of that which is under his power.

Here ends the story of Jonah which he tells himself—and he did not add anything to it because nothing needs to be added. The Lord's question to him was altogether unanswerable and Jonah felt it to be so. Let us hope that during the rest of his life, he so lived as to rejoice in the sparing mercy of God. He had stood outside the door, like the elder brother who was angry, and would not go in, and who said to his father," Lo, these many years have I served you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this, your son, was come, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf." But his father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours."

I hope that he went in and I trust that Jonah also went in and lived with the penitent Ninevites, and that all were happy together in the love of the God who had been so gracious to them.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—106 (PART II), 212, 205.

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

DELIVERANCE FROM THE PIT
NO. 2505

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 21, 1885.

"Then He is gracious unto him, and says, Deliver him from going down to the Pit: I have found a ransom." Job 33:24.

LET it never be forgotten that in all that God does, He acts from good reasons. You observe that the text, speaking of the sick man, represents God as saying, "Deliver him from going down to the Pit: I have found a ransom." If I understand the passage as relating solely to a sick man and take the words just on the natural common level where some place them, I would still say that the Lord, here, gives a reason why He suspends the operations of pain and disease and raises up the sufferer—"I have found a ransom." There is always a reason for every act of Grace which God performs for man. He acts sovereignly and, therefore, He is not bound to give any reason for His actions, but He always acts wisely and, therefore, He has a reason for so acting. Writing to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul says that God "works all things after the counsel of His own will." It is not an arbitrary will, but a will arising out of the wisdom and holiness of His Character. So God has a reason for raising men up from their sickness, but that reason is not found in them, but in Himself. The sick man does not give God a reason for restoring him, but God finds it, Himself. "I have found a ransom." Possibly, the man does not even know the reason for his restoration—he may be so blind of heart that he does not care to think whether there is any reason for it or not—but God finds a reason for His mercy and finds it entirely in Himself. He is gracious to whom He will be gracious and He has compassion on whom He will have compassion. So let each one of us think, "If I have been raised from sickness. If my life, which was almost gone, has been spared, I may not know why God has done it, but certainly He *has* done it in infinite wisdom and compassion. And it is only right for me to feel that a life which has been so remarkably prolonged ought to be entirely dedicated unto Him who has prolonged it."

Having begun my sermon with that thought, I shall take a deep dive and go to another and a fuller meaning of our text, if not more true than this which I have first mentioned. Beloved Friends, there is a higher restoration than recovery from *bodily* sickness! There is such a thing as sickness of the *soul* which is, in God's esteem, far worse than disease of body and, blessed be His name, there is such a thing as recovery from soul-sickness even to those who are so far gone that they appear to be going down into the Pit! God can deal with sinners when they are on the

very brink of Hell! He can deal in love with them when the soil slips from under their feet and they, themselves, are about to dash into that Pit that is bottomless. He can come in, even then, and rescue them to the praise of the glory of His Grace!

I. Now, coming to our text, I shall ask you, first, to look with me upon A MAN IN GREAT PERIL. That man is here tonight—let him look to himself and may God help him to see himself as a man in great peril! This is his peril—he is "going down to the Pit." That phrase describes his whole life—going down, down, down—and the end of that going down, unless the Lord shall deliver him, will be that, before long, he will go finally down into the Pit of destruction!

Notice, first, that this is a *daily and common danger*. In some respects this man in peril is a representative of each one of us. If we are unconverted, if we are unrenewed by Divine Grace, every one of us is in danger of going down into the Pit of woe! Think of it, there may be, my Friend, but a *step* between you and death! Only the other morning there was one, well known to many of us, who spoke with his Friends apparently in health. He retired from the room for a moment and they wondered where he was as he did not come back. They sought him out and found that he was dead! He was gone, as in a moment. Blessed be God, we have a sure and certain hope that though he has gone down into the grave—he could go no lower, for his soul was at once with his Savior—and out of that grave his body shall arise at the sounding of the last trumpet! But as for unconverted men and women, they may be in Hell before the clock ticks again! It is a terrible reflection, my unsaved Friend, to think how little there is between you and eternity. How thin is the wall! "Wall?"—Did I call it a wall? Rather let me say, how thin the *gauze*! "Gauze"—did I call it? There is no word in our own or any other language that can adequately express the nearness of eternity! We are here—and we are gone—gone into the Presence of God in a single instant! Gone to render to the Judge of All our last account! You are going, Friend, you are going down to the Pit unless Sovereign Mercy shall step in and prevent it!

Further, there are some who, *of set purpose, are going down to the Pit*. In this chapter, Elihu said of some that God sends sickness to them that He may withdraw them from their purpose. Some seem to be desperately bent on mischief, as if they were determined to ruin themselves. How often do we see it in the case of a young man who has been well brought up, when he comes into possession of his money and gets what he calls his liberty—nothing that he has learned in his youth appears to restrain him! No tearful admonitions are any check upon him—he appears to be resolved to destroy himself! We have known some cases of that kind and we know others now. Oh, if they were as determined to be *right* as they are resolved to be *wrong*, they might greatly help to turn the world upside down! But, alas, they seem to spare no expense to ensure their own destruction—they are in a dreadful hurry to be rid of all their property, to bring their body into a state of disease—and to bring their soul into a state of damnation! They cannot do enough to secure their own destruction! They even lay violent hands upon their own characters, as if they were insatiably at enmity with their own souls. Many of you know such

people as I am describing and you know that they are going down to the Pit. By what are called amusements, by what are said to be pleasures—but which are really only groveling degradations of the soul to the worst purposes of the flesh—all these men are going down to the Pit. It is a dreadful state for anyone to be in, yet I am even now addressing some who are in just such a condition—I feel sure that I am. May the description, brief as it is, be complete enough to let the sinner see himself as he really is—in imminent peril of going down into the Pit!

There are some, also, who are *going down to the Pit through their pride*. They are not doing anything positively vicious, but they are so good in their own estimation, or so indifferent to the claims of God, that they do not want to hear about salvation. They stand entirely in their own strength and they seem to defy the humbling Gospel of the Grace of God—they will not hear it—they say by their actions, if not in so many words, "Who is God that we should servo Him? What is death that we should have any fear concerning it? What is eternity that we should ever let our spirit be depressed at the thought of it?" If I were just now to try to describe the Day of Judgment and to picture the Great White Throne with the Judge of All sitting upon it, there are many in such a condition of heart that they would merely smile at it all and continue in their sin! A sinner may perish through pride just as easily as through any other sin. A man may, in his pride, hang himself on a gallows as high as that of Haman. And he will perish as surely as another who casts himself down into the Pit by some groveling loathsome sin.

There are others who feel *some present apprehension of coming judgment*. They are not your merry men and women who count it one of the wisest things to drive dull care away, for they are eaten up with care. They feel that they are going down to the Pit—I do not say that all have felt this apprehension as I did—but this is how it came to me. I knew that I was guilty. I knew that I had offended God. I knew that I had transgressed against light and knowledge and I did not know when God might call me to account. But I did know this—when I awoke in the morning, the first thought I had was that I had to deal with a justly angry God who might suddenly require my soul of me! Often, during the day, when I had a little time for quiet meditation, a great depression of spirit would come upon me because I felt that sin, sin, SIN had outlawed me from my God! I wondered that the earth bore up such a sinner as I was and that the heavens did not fall and crush me—and the stars in their courses did not fight against such a wretch as I felt myself to be. Then, indeed, did I seem as if I should go down to the Pit! If I fell asleep, I dreamt of that Pit, and if I woke, I seemed to wake only to endure the tortures of the never-dying worm of conscience that was perpetually gnawing at my heart!

I went to the House of God and heard what I supposed was the Gospel, but it was no Gospel to me. My soul abhorred all manner of meat—I could not lay hold upon a promise, or indulge a hope—and I felt that I was going down to the Pit. If anyone had asked me what would become of me, I would have answered, "I am going down to the Pit." If anyone had entreated me to hope that mercy might come to me, I would have refused

to entertain such a hope, for I felt that I was going down to the Pit! Well, dear Friends, it was while I was in that dreadful state of mind that Infinite Mercy met with me and saved me! And I wish that I had, in my present congregation, many wounded, broken spirits. Many weary, heavy-laden souls, for it is sweet work to preach the Gospel to such people!—

"A sinner is a sacred thing,
The Holy Spirit has made him so"

—that is, a *really convicted sinner*, not a sham sinner, but one who acknowledges that the title belongs to him and says, "Put that label upon me, for that is what I am! I deserve the wrath of God and I feel as if the first spattering drops of the fiery tempest have already fallen upon me." This is the man who sees a true description of himself in the words of our text, "going down to the Pit."

If you add to all this the fact that the man, as Elihu describes him, was suffering from a fatal sickness, so that he dreaded the actual nearness of death, you have, indeed, an unhappy case before you. See that young woman whom consumption has marked for its victim—it is not with her the thought that she shall go down to the Pit in 20 years' time, but her feet are already far on the road! Or, look at that young man who cannot delude himself with the idea that he will go down to the Pit at the end of threes-core years and ten, but who fears that he may not even live three-score days! He has a mortal malady within him that is dragging him down from all hope and joy—this dread fear has settled like a vampire upon his soul—that he is going down to the Pit! This is the man whom I want to point out, for he is somewhere in this building. God help him to listen while I say some words which, perhaps, will bring comfort to him in this state of peril in which he is at present found!

II. Now let us notice, in the second place, A NEW PRINCIPLE IN ACTION—"Then He is gracious unto him." What does that expression mean? That word, "gracious," has more music in it than all the oratorios of Handel, though they are the chief of earthly music.

"Then He is gracious unto him." What does that mean? Well, "gracious" means, first, *free favor*. It means that when this man is as full of sin as an egg is full of meat. When he is as black with iniquity as a foul chimney which hangs festooned with soot—it means even then God's favor shall come to him and look upon him *just as he is* in all his defilement and ill-desert—and God shall be gracious to him! Our text does not say, "God shall deal with him in justice. He shall charge, accuse, condemn and punish him." No, the message is, "He is gracious unto him." The Lord comes to this poor lost wretch and says, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you." The Lord comes to such guilty souls and just when they think that His next words will be, "Depart, you cursed," He says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Now this is *not* what the man *deserves*—it is the very opposite of his deserts! He has no natural right to such treatment as this—it is the gift of Divine Sovereignty, not the purchase of man's merit. "He is gracious unto him." The prisoner is justly condemned to death, but the King is

gracious and gives him a free pardon! The prisoner is ready to be executed, but there comes to him undeserved deliverance from all punishment, for the King's own Son has borne the penalty of all his iniquities! Does not this Truth of God make your mouths water, you who feel that you are going down to the Pit? I am sure it does, if you have ever known the bitterness of sin! "Oh," you say, "is there such a God as this?" Yes, there is! A God, "merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." "He delights in mercy." His compassions fail not, therefore we are not consumed!

That is the first meaning of Grace, that free and undeserved favor of God which forgives and blots out sin and iniquity.

But Grace has another meaning in Holy Scripture—it means *saving interference*— a certain Divine operation by which God works upon the wills and affections of men so as to change and renew them! When God is gracious to a man, He does something *to* that man as well as *for* that man. The Lord comes in the power of His Grace and takes out of the sinner's heart, the stone that was there, and makes tender that heart which once was hard as the northern iron and steel. He comes and takes the iron sinew out of the neck and makes the obstinate man to be yielding and pliable. He comes and changes the affections so that the man hates what he once loved, and loves what he once hated. In a word, where the Grace of God comes, it makes a man to be born-again even when he is old, so that, spiritually speaking, his flesh becomes fresher than that of a little child. He begins life anew, for he is a new creature in Christ Jesus! All his past sin is blotted out and his future is brightening up into the full blaze of eternal glory!

Yet this is the very man whom I described just now as going down to the Pit! But the Lord has been gracious to him. He has said to him, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." The Lord has said to him, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you. Go, and sin no more." Is not this a most comforting message? Note that the text says, "then." In the very extremity of his going down to the Pit, "then," when he has come almost to the last step down to that fearful gulf and a cruel hand seems pushing him down to eternal destruction, "then," at that moment, the Lord is gracious to him! Infinite pleasure flashes into his face, for the almighty loving kindness of God pulls him back from the Pit and sets his feet on a new track towards the land of Glory and the face of God above!

III. This brings me to my third point, which is concerning how this Grace operates. It operates by A WORD OF POWER.

This man was going down to the Pit, but God said, "Deliver him." To whom is this command spoken? It appears to be addressed *to the messengers of Divine Justice*. They have grasped the guilty man, they have bound him, they are taking him off to the place of death and well does he deserve to die—but the great King upon the Throne says to His ministers of justice, "Deliver him, let him go, deliver him from going down to the Pit." And, in an instant, his chains are snapped, his bonds drop off and the man is free—freed by the word of the King, Himself. No sheriff's offi-

cer can arrest him, now. None of all the police of the universe can lay a finger on him, now, for God has said to all of them, "Let him go. Deliver him from going down to the Pit." Here is a clean jail delivery for the prisoners of hope—they are set free by the mandate of the eternal God!

More than that, the man was not only bound by justice, but he was *fettered by his sin*. His sins held him captive and they were dragging him down to the Pit. There was drunkenness, for instance, which held him as in a vice, so that he could not stir hand or foot to set himself free. His thirst followed his drinking and his drinking followed his thirst—and then his thirst returned after his drinking till he brought himself to a delirium from which he could not possibly escape by his own power! Perhaps it was the foul-mouthed demon of blasphemy that held him in bondage, or the black demon of vice and licentiousness, but, whatever was the band by which the man was held, every hour kept putting about him a fresh and a stronger rope till he was bound, like Samson of old, to make sport for those who had him in captivity! But just as he seemed about to be dragged down to Hell, a voice came from the excellent Glory, "Deliver him from going down to the Pit"—and Infinite Mercy dragged off his evil habits, snapped his bands and set him free! Now the man no longer loved the lusts of the flesh and the passions of his body, but he was God's free man seeking to do only his Lord's will! And if God shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed! It is a grand thing to get rid of drunkenness—with all my heart I advise you to try total abstinence—but it is a better thing to get rid of all sin at once! I mean, the reigning power of every sin by yielding yourself up to the supreme Grace of God who is able to work in you at such a rate that *all sin* shall be made detestable to you and you shall rise above it to the praise of the glory of His Grace.

Brothers and Sisters, I see this same man, in later life, *attacked by his old sins*. There is a certain, "Cutthroat Lane" on the way to Heaven. I have been down it, myself, and I am afraid I may have to go down it yet again. It is a place where the hedges meet and it is very dark—and it is also very miry and muddy—and when a man is slipping about and can hardly see his own hand, there are certain villains that come pouncing upon him, not with the highwayman's cry, "Your money or your life," but they seek to seize his treasure, his life and all that he has! At such a moment as that, it sometimes happens that the man puts his hand to his side to draw his sword, but he finds that it is gone! He determines to fight as best he can, but what can he do against such terrible odds when he is alone and unarmed? But oh, what a blessed thing it is for him, just then, to hear, as Bunyan says, the sound of a horse's hoof and to know that there is a patrol going down the King's Highway! And he cannot only hear the ring of His horse's hoofs, but he can hear the King's own voice, crying out from the Throne, itself, "Deliver him! Deliver him! Deliver him from going down to the Pit."

That voice you shall always hear, if you are a child of God, when you get into a fix, when you are brought into peril and trouble. God has given commandment to save you and you shall be saved—saved from yourself and from all the attacks of your old sins! Saved from the devil! Saved from evil company, for God has said it, "Deliver him from going down to

the Pit." That deliverance of God is an eternal one, nor shall the infernal lion ever be able to rend one sheep or lamb that the Great Shepherd deigns to keep!

Now to come back to my own story. I remember when I felt that I was going down to the Pit and I cannot forget one blessed, blessed day. The snow-flakes fell thick and heavy that morning and I was going, according to my habit, to a certain very respectable place of worship where I should hear a very respectable minister who might have left me in my misery to this day. But it was too cold and the snow was too deep for me to go so far. So I turned into the little Primitive Methodist Chapel in Colchester and sat there feeling that I was going down to the Pit, although I was sitting in the House of God to hear the Gospel. The clock of mercy struck in Heaven the hour and moment of my deliverance, for the time had come! Thus had the eternal purpose of Jehovah decreed it! And when the preacher opened the Book and gave out his text, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else," and when he began to cry in simple terms, "Look! It is all you have to do! Look out of yourself and away from yourself, and look to Christ! Not to forms and ceremonies, or works, or feelings, but look to what Christ has done!" I did look and in that moment went out this word, "Deliver him from going down to the Pit," and I was delivered! For, as the moment before there was none more wretched than I was, so, within that second, there was none more joyous! It took no longer time than does the lightning-flash! It was done and never has it been undone! I looked and lived and leaped in joyful liberty as I beheld sin punished upon the great Substitute and put away forever from all those who will only trust Him!

That is what looking to Christ means—trusting in His One Great Sacrifice! O dear Friends, I do pray the Lord to speak in great Grace concerning some of you and to say, "Deliver him from going down to the Pit." You may think that when I speak like this, there is some of the excitement of enthusiasm about my language, but I reckon that I talk cold icicles about a thing that is hotter than the furnace! Oh, the blessedness, the joy, the exquisite peace, the overflowing happiness of believing in Christ! If you know anything about the darkness, you are the very person to know something about the Light of God! If you know anything of sorrow for sin, you are the very man or woman to understand the joy of sin being put away! And it will be all done for you if you will but look to Jesus—if you will simply trust Him!

III. I finish by noticing that in this case God supplies us with His reason for delivering a soul and it is AN ARGUMENT OF LOVE—"Deliver him from going down to the Pit: I have found a ransom."

This is the only reason why any man shall be delivered from going down to the Pit—because God has found a ransom. There is no way of salvation but by the Ransom—all who are ever saved are saved by the Ransom. And if you, dear Friend, would be saved, it must be by the Ransom—and there is but one.

Observe that the text says, "I have found a ransom." This ransom *is an invention of Divine Wisdom.* I do not think it would ever have occurred to any mind but the mind of God, Himself, to save sinners by the substitu-

tionary Sacrifice of Christ. The most astonishing novelty under Heaven is the old, old story of the Cross of Christ! That ever God should take upon Himself the sin of His own creatures, that, in order to be able to justly forgive, God, Himself, should bear the punishment which He must inflict for the creatures' sin—this is something marvelous to the last degree! The rebel sins and the King Himself suffers the penalty for the rebellion! The offender commits the trespass and the Judge bears the punishment! Such a plan was never heard of in human courts of law—or if it has ever been spoken of there, it was because, first of all, both the ears of him who heard it had been made to tingle while God revealed it out of His own heart. "I have found a ransom." Nobody would have thought of that way of the deliverance of a sinner from the pit of Hell through a ransom if God had not thought of it!

Notice, next, that God has not only invented a way of deliverance, but he has found a ransom. So that *it is a gift of Divine Love.* "Deliver him from going down to the Pit"—it does not say, "because there is a ransom," or, "I will accept one if he finds it, and brings it"—but the Lord, Himself, says, "I have found a ransom." It is the man who sinned, but it is *God* who found the ransom! It is the man who is going down to the Pit, but it is *God* who finds a ransom! Surely, if you have sold yourself to sin and Satan, you must find the ransom to get yourself set free, must you not? "No," says Sovereign Grace, "the man has sold himself into slavery, but *I* have found a ransom. I have broken the bonds from his neck and set him free by an immense price which I, Myself, have found—found it in My own bosom where My only-begotten and well-beloved Son was lying. I found it in *Myself*, for I have given up Myself to bleed and die for mortal men." Oh, this is wonderful Grace, indeed—that God should deliver and should deliver through a ransom—and should deliver through a ransom that He has, Himself, found!

And is there not something very wonderful in the *assurance of this Truth of God*? "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom." God does not say "There may be a ransom for the poor soul. Possibly I may find a ransom somewhere." No, He says, "I *have found* a ransom." Now, if a slave were in the bitterest of bondage, yet if his master said to him, "I have the ransom for you," that man must feel certain of his liberty because if he who held him in bondage has found a ransom, he certainly will hold him in bondage no longer! Sinner, do not doubt your deliverance, for *God has said it*—"I have found a ransom." If you had only heard this sentence uttered by a mortal man, you might have questioned the truth of it, but when God Himself proclaims concerning him who is going down to the Pit, "I have found a ransom," then is the deliverance certain! Indeed, it is already accomplished! Therefore, go you free and rejoice in the liberty that God has given you!

To my mind, and with this thought I will finish, there is the ring of heavenly music in this message. "Deliver him from going down to the Pit: I have found a ransom." I suppose you never heard a man who had found a treasure cry out to let everyone know what he had found. Perhaps he would not mention it to anyone but his wife. When he wished to make her heart glad by sharing the fortune with her, he said to her, "I

have found a treasure." But you may have heard a mother say, when her child had been lost in the woods, perhaps, and had been sought for by many, when at last she has discovered him, "I have found my boy!" Oh, it is wonderful, the joy of a mother's heart when she has found her child! But to me there is the sound of bells, there is the music of a marriage peal in this verse as God, looking on a sinner slipping down to Hell, says, "Deliver him from going down to the Pit: I have found a ransom." Almighty love seems to sing out with all her might and rocks, hills, and valleys suffice not to repeat the echo of the strain, "I have found, I have found, I have found a ransom!" This is God's "Eureka!" "I have found a ransom. I did not look for a ransom among the angels, for I knew they were too weak to furnish it. I looked not for it among the sons of men, for I knew it was not to be found there—they were too fallen and guilty. The sea said, 'It is not in me.' All creation cried, 'It is not in me.' But I looked on my Well-Beloved and I heard Him say, 'Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart.' I saw Him descend to earth and hide Himself in an Infant's form; I saw Him toiling on in holy servitude to My perfect Law; I saw Him give His hands to the nails, and His side to the spear. I heard Him cry, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' I bowed the ear of My Glory and I drank in His conquering cry, 'It is finished,' and then I, the Infinite, the Eternal, the Ever-Blessed, the Just, the Gracious, said, 'I have found a Ransom.'" Thus, the Lord rejoices over you and over me with singing as He cries, "I have found a Ransom!" How greatly did He rejoice over the finished work of His well-beloved Son! Therefore, sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth, for the Lord, Himself, delights in the message He delivers to us, "I have found a Ransom!"

Now, dear Hearts, if God has found a Ransom and speaks thus joyously about it, I do pray you to accept it. "If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land." Receive Christ and you have the proof that God has received you. Only take Him—you have nothing else to do! Put out that empty hand of yours, black though it is, and receive in it the Pearl of Great Price, even the Christ of God, Himself! Receive Him, accept Him, believe Him, trust Him! That is all you have to do. Oh, will you not trust Him? Can you doubt Him? If God takes upon Himself our nature and in that nature, dies, I cannot only trust Him with my soul, but if I had all your souls within my body, and all the souls of the millions of London all gathered beneath this breast—and if I had besides that the souls of all the sinners who have ever lived, all compressed within this one frame—I could believe that the dying Christ could blot out all that mass of sin! I believe it and so confide in Him—will not you? Verily, if you will not believe, neither shall you be established! But he that believes shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end! May God add His own blessing, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOB 33.

This is a speech of young Elihu who had sat quietly listening to the taunting words of the three "candid Friends" of Job—and to the some-

what exasperated replies of the Patriarch. At last, the young man breaks the silence and, with some dignity, and quite sufficient self-content, he thus addresses himself to Job.

Verse 1. *Therefore, Job, I pray you, hear my speeches and listen to all my words.* "I am but a young man, but I speak because I cannot be quiet. An impulse moves me. I am as a vessel needing vent. I desire to speak impartially and, therefore, hear me, but hear *all* that I have to say. Do not listen merely here and there to a part of my speech, but hearken to all my words." Sometimes, it is very necessary to beg our hearers not to run away with only one sentence, or even with one sentiment. "Hear my speeches and listen to all my words," for there is a proportion in truth, and one truth has to be balanced with all the others. A statement may be all the better for being unguarded and more forcible because it stands alone—and yet it may need that another statement should be heard with it lest it should be misunderstood. Therefore the preacher also says to his hearer, "I pray you, hear my speeches and listen to all my words."

2. *Behold, now I have opened my mouth, my tongue has spoken in my mouth.* That is to say, "I speak with much solemnity, not as one who chatters without sense, or without due consideration, but I have opened my mouth deliberately, as one who has something to say—and I speak with my best powers of speech, as one who wishes to persuade those who hear him."

3. *My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart: and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly.* What a lesson this is to those of us who preach to others—that we speak out of the uprightness of our heart and feel that, however others may judge us, we are sincere before God in what we say! How necessary, also, is it, especially in these days, that we should speak plainly, so as to be easily understood! Some men never think clearly and, therefore, they never speak clearly. And, oftentimes, the darkness of a man's speech is only the result of the darkness of his mind—he has no clearly-defined notion of what he has to say. Let every young man who has to teach others resolve that this utterance of Elihu shall also be his, "My lips shall utter knowledge clearly."

4. *The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty has given me life.* That is to say, "I am as much the creature of God as these three old gentlemen are, these three wise Friends who have spoken so tartly. I am as much endowed with the Spirit of God as you are, O Job, and, therefore, I speak to you in His name." Should not this be a lesson to every one of us to try and do all that we can for God? Every Christian may say, "'The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty has given me life.' Therefore let me use my very existence, the life that is breathed into me, for that Almighty Creator who has made me what I am."

5. *If you can answer me, set your words in order before me, stand up.* He who speaks reason is ready to hear reason. It is only the unreasonable talker who will not allow others to have a word to say in reply. "If you can answer me," says Elihu to Job, "set your words in order before me, stand up."

6. *Behold, I am, according to your wish, in God's place: I also am formed out of the day.* Job had wished that someone would stand up and speak for God, someone without the terror that seemed inseparable from the Infinite, someone without the power of Omnipotence, someone who would be more nearly his equal, with whom he could debate the questions which perplexed him. So Elihu says, "I am, according to your wish, in God's place: I also am formed out of the day."

7-11. *Behold, my terror shall not make you afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon you. 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, He puts my feet in the stocks, He marks all my paths.* Elihu did not make this excuse for Job because he had been slandered by his Friends and that his statement of innocence was not so much absolute towards God as it was defensive towards men. Still, there is no doubt that Job had gone too far in this direction. Perhaps for this very reason his troubles had come upon him, because he was, in a measure, self-righteous. In some small degree, at any rate, he may have prided himself upon his personal excellence. Elihu does well, therefore, in all faithfulness, to point out the blot in what Job had said.

12, 13. *Behold, in this you are not just: I will answer you, that God is greater than man. Why do you strive against Him? For He gives not account of any of His matters.* This man seems to have the very Spirit that rested upon the Apostle Paul when he was arguing with an objector against the Lord's way of working, "No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have You made me thus?" The greatness and grandeur of the Eternal should prevent our raising objections against anything that He does. Who are we, the moths of a moment, the creatures of an hour, that we should interrogate the Infinite and question our Maker? What He does must of necessity be right—though we cannot understand how it is so, we must believe it and meekly bow to the will of the Lord!

14-17. *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, in slumbering upon the bed; then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction, that He may withdraw man from his purpose and hide pride from man.* It is always one great object of the Divine dealings to make and keep us humble. It is strange that creatures so insignificant as we are should be perpetually infected with the foul disease of pride—this form of mental scarlet fever continually breaks out in puny man and, therefore, God deals with him that He may "hide pride from man."

18, 19. *He keeps back his soul from the Pit, and his life from perishing by the sword. He is chastened also with pain upon his bed and the multitude of his bones with strong pain.* Pain of body is usually looked upon as a great evil and, doubtless, it is so in some respects, but it wraps up within itself great mercy. There are some who can scarcely be taught at all except through physical pain. And if it were possible to abolish sickness and suffering, where would men go in the wantonness of their

strength? Does not this very affliction often chide man and bid him *think*—and cause him to return to his Maker, when, otherwise, he would be as thoughtless as the beasts that perish?

20-24. *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. If there is a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man His uprightness: then He is gracious unto him, and says, Deliver him from going down to the Pit: I have found a ransom.* Happy is the messenger who comes with such a message as that! Such was the Prophet Isaiah to Hezekiah when the king was sick unto death. Such is the minister of God's Word when he comes with glad tidings of redemption and God, through him, says of the spiritually sick man, "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 profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the Pit, and his life shall see the light.* See the easy terms of God's love and mercy? The man does but confess that he has sinned—he admits that he has perverted the right, he confesses that he has gained no profit thereby—and God, seeing him in such a state of heart as this, delivers his soul from going down to the Pit, and his life shall see the light! What a gracious God we serve! How cruel to continue to offend Him when He is so ready to forgive!

29, 30. *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.* The chastisement of sickness and the flagellation of pain whip the sinner back to Him, who alone can save him! These are the black dogs of the Great Shepherd wherewith He brings back wandering sheep till they come again under His crook and He leads them into green pastures.

31-33. *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, listen to me: hold your peace, and I shall teach you wisdom.* May the Lord graciously apply to all our hearts this instructive portion of Old Testament Scripture! There is a message in it to each of us as well as to the Patriarch, Job, to whom it was specially addressed.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—259, 412, 286.

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

GOD'S LAW IN MAN'S HEART
NO. 2506

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1897.
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"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."
Hebrews 8:10.

WHEN God gave Israel His Law—the Law of the First Covenant—it was such a holy Law that it ought to have been kept by the people. It was a just and righteous Law, concerning which God said, "You shall do My judgments, and keep My ordinances, to walk therein: I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore keep My statutes, and My judgments: which if a man does, he shall live in them: I am the Lord." The Law of the Ten Commandments is strictly just—it is such a Law as a man might make for himself if he studied his own best interests and had wisdom enough to frame it aright. It is a perfect Law in which the interests of God and man are both studied. It is not a partial Law, but impartial, complete, and covering all the circumstances of life. You could not take away one command out of the ten without spoiling both tables of the Law and you could not add another command without being guilty of making a superfluity. The Law is holy, just and good—it is like the God who made it—it is a perfect Law. Then, surely, it ought to have been kept. When men revolt against unjust laws, they are to be commended, but when a law is admitted to be *perfect*, then disobedience to it is an act of exceeding guilt.

Further, God not only gave a Law which ought to have been kept because of its own intrinsic excellence, but He also gave it in a very wonderful way which ought to have ensured its observance by the people. The Lord came down upon Mount Sinai in fire and the mountain was altogether on a smoke—and the smoke thereof ascended "as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." And the sight that was then seen on Sinai and the sounds that were there heard, and all the pomp and awful grandeur were so terrible that even Moses—that boldest, calmest, quietest of men said, "I do exceedingly fear and quake." The children of Israel, as they heard that Law proclaimed, were so amazed and overwhelmed with God's display of His majesty and might, that they were ready enough to promise to keep His Commandments. The Law of God could not have been made known to mankind in grander or more sublime style than was displayed in the giving of that Covenant on Mount Sinai.

And, dear Friends, after the giving of the Law, did not God affix to it those terrible penalties which should have prevented men from disobeying His commands? "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them." "The soul that sins, it shall die." It was the capital sentence that was to be pronounced upon the disobedient—there could be no heavier punishment than that! God had, as it were, drawn His sword against sin, and if man had been a reasonable being, he ought *at once* to have started back from committing an act which he might be sure would make God his foe.

Moreover, the blessings that were appended to the keeping of the Law ought to have induced men to keep it. Look again at those words I quoted just now—"You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments: which if a man does, he shall live in them: I am the Lord." This did not mean that the man who kept God's Law should merely exist—there are some in these degenerate days who seek to make out life to be existence and death to be annihilation, but there is little likeness between the words, or between what those words mean. "He shall live in them," said the Lord concerning the man who kept His Law—and there is a fullness of blessedness couched in that word, "live." If men had kept the Covenant of the Lord—if Adam, for instance, had kept it in the Garden of Eden, the rose would have been without a thorn to tear his flesh, and the enjoyment of life would never have been marred by the bitterness of toil or grief.

But, alas, notwithstanding all these solemn sanctions of the ancient Covenant, men did not keep it. The promise, "This do, and you shall live," never produced any doing that was worthy to be rewarded with life, and the threat, "Do this, and you shall die," never kept any man back from daringly venturing into the wrong road which leads unto death! The fact is, that the Covenant of Works, if it is looked upon as a way of safety, is a total failure! No man ever persevered in it unto the end and no man ever attained unto life by keeping it. Nor can we, now that we are fallen, ever hope to be better than our unfallen covenant-head, Adam. Nor may we, who are already lost and condemned by our sinful works, dream for a moment that we shall be able to save ourselves by our works. You see, dear Friends, the first Covenant was in these terms—"You do right and God will reward you for it. If you deserve life, God will give it to you." Now, as you all know right well, that Covenant was broken all to pieces—it was unable to stand by reason of the weakness of our flesh and the corruptness of our nature!

So God set aside that first Covenant. He put it away as an outworn and useless thing and He brought in a new Covenant—the Covenant of Grace—and in our text we see what is the tenor of it. "I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." This is one of the most glorious promises that ever fell from the lips of Infinite Love. God said not, "I will come again, as I came on Sinai, and thunder at them." No, but, "I will come in gentleness and mercy, and find a way into their hearts." He did not say, "I will take two great tablets of stone and with My finger write out My Law before their eyes." No, but, "I will put My finger

upon their hearts, and there will I write My Law." He did not say, "I will give promises and threats that shall be the safeguard of this new Covenant," but, "I will, with My Spirit, graciously operate upon their minds and their hearts, and so I will sweetly influence them to serve Me—not for reward, nor from any servile motive, but because they know Me, and they love Me, and they feel it to be their delight to walk in the way of My Commandments." O dear Sirs, may you all be sharers in the blessings of that new Covenant! May God say this of you and do this to you! And if so, we shall meet in the land of Glory, to sing unto the Grace of that eternal God who has worked so wondrously with us, and in us, and for us!

Coming directly to the text, I shall, first of all, speak upon the *meaning of this blessing*. Secondly, upon the *means whereby God bestows this blessing upon us*, trying to show you with what pencil the Lord writes upon the human heart. And, thirdly, I shall dwell for a few minutes upon the *exceeding Grace of this blessing*.

I. First, then, I am to speak upon THE MEANING OF THIS BLESSING—"I will put My Laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." It means, first, that when God comes to deal with His own chosen people, to really save them, He makes them to know His Law. The Law still stands in the Old Testament and our blessed Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, has condensed it into one word, "Love." And then He has expanded it throughout the whole of His earthly life to show us how it ought to be kept. So we sing—

"My dear Redeemer and my Lord,
I read my duty in your Word,
But in Your life the Law appears
Drawn out in living characters."

But although we can read that Law in the Scriptures and see it worked out in the life of Christ, yet it is necessary that the Spirit of God should come and enlighten us with regard to it if we are *really* to know what it is. Otherwise, a man may hear the Ten Commandments read every Sunday and go on breaking them without ever knowing that he is breaking them! He may be keeping the letter of the Commandments and yet, all the while, be violating their spirit.

When the Holy Spirit comes to us, He shows us what the Law really is. Take, for instance, the Commandment, "You shall not commit adultery." "Well," says one, "I have not broken *that* Commandment!" "Stay," says the Spirit of God, "till you know the spiritual meaning of that Commandment, for whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." There is, also, the Commandment, "You shall not kill." "Oh," says the man, "I *never* killed anybody, I have not committed murder!" "But," says the Spirit of God, "whoever hates his brother is a murderer." When the Lord thus writes His Law upon our heart, He makes us to know the far-reaching power and scope of the Commandment. He causes us to understand that it touches not only actions and words, but *thoughts*, yes, and the most transient *imaginations*—the things that are scarcely born within us—the sights that pass in a moment across the mind, like a stray passenger who passes in front of the camera when a photographer is taking a view! The Spirit of

God teaches us that even these momentary impressions are sinful and that the very thought of foolishness is sin.

Did you, dear Friend, ever have the Truths of God truly written on your heart? If so, I will tell you how you felt—you abhorred yourself and you said, "Who can stand before this terrible Law? Who can ever hope to keep these Commandments?" You looked to the flames that Moses saw on Sinai and you shrank and trembled almost unto despair! And you entreated that these terrible words should not be spoken to you any more. Yet it was good for you to thus be made to know the Law of God—not in the letter of it, only, but in its cutting, crushing, killing spirit—for it works death to self-righteousness and death to all carnal boastings! When the Law comes, sin revives and we die—that is all that can come of it by itself. Yet it is necessary that there should be such a death as that and that there should be such a revival of sin that we may know the truth about it—and under the force of that truth may be driven to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the "end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes." So, then, writing the Law in our heart means, first, making us know what the Law really is.

If that is done, the Lord is pleased, next, to cause His people to *remember that Law*. When a thing is "learned by heart," you know the common meaning of that expression, even among our children. If they have learned a thing by heart rather than merely by rote, they have made it their own and it remains with them. A man with whom God the Holy Spirit deals is one who does not have to go to the 20th of Exodus to know what the Law is. He does not need to stop and ask concerning most things, "Is this right?" or, "Is this wrong?" He carries within him a balance and a scale, a standard and test by which he can try these things for himself! He has the Law of his God written upon his heart, so that, almost as soon as he looks at a thing, he begins to perceive whether there is evil in it or whether it is good. There is a sort of sensitiveness in his soul which makes him discern between good and evil. When God the Holy Spirit is dealing with him, there is a true, enlightened conscience within him, so that he no longer puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, or darkness for light and light for darkness—something within him tells him, "This is right," or, "That is wrong." It is a most blessed thing when this is the case and it is *always* the work of the Spirit of God!

I know that there is some sort of a conscience in most men. I am afraid it is a very small rush light in some and that it is almost blown out by their evil habits. They can even make themselves think that they are doing right when they are as wrong as wrong can be! But in a child of God there is a burning and a shining light which reveals the truth concerning sin. There is within him a something that cannot be silenced—this is that principle or power which John Bunyan calls, in his, *Holy War*, "Mr. Conscience the Recorder of Mansoul." You know that when the city of Mansoul rebelled against the great King Shaddai and came under the sway of Diabolus, they shut Mr. Recorder Conscience up in a dark room, for they did not want to let him see what was being done. Yet, notwithstanding, when the old gentleman had his fits, he used to sorely

trouble the inhabitants of the guilty town—so they kept him under lock and key as much as possible. But when Mr. Recorder Conscience gets full liberty and lifts his brow into the sunlight, ah, Sirs, then are we guided in a very different way from that of ungodly men who follow their own evil course! Then does the Lord say, "I will put My Laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." The Law is there to censure or to cheer! It is there to let us hear its voice say, "This is the way, walk in it." Or it is there to say, "Stay where you are, go no farther." Or, "Return, you backsliding daughter, and seek mercy of the Lord."

God does more than that for His people. When He writes His Law in our heart, He makes us to *approve it*. An ungodly man wishes to alter God's Law. "There," he says, "I do not like *that* Commandment, 'You shall not steal,' I should like to be a little bit of a trickster." Another says, "I do not like that purity of which the minister spoke just now, I should like to indulge myself a little. Am I to have *no* pleasure?" But when the Law of the Lord is written in his heart, the man says, "The Law is right." He would not alter it if he could! There is nothing that he hates more than the lowering of the tone of the Law of God, for he does not want a lax morality. "Oh, no," he says, "let us have the highest form of righteousness that can be—and may God help me to live up to it!" Paul says, "I delight in the Law of God after the inward man." And so is it with every true child of God—he cannot think of the holiness of God without, at once, saying, "I would not have Him other than He is—let Him be holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, for as such I can worship Him. But if He were less than that, I could not esteem Him." If he hears of God's Justice, he delights even in that stern attribute, for he would not have an unjust God! It is a great thing when God leads a man to approve of all that is right. I do not mean merely to acknowledge that it is right, but to be *glad* that it is so, and to wish that in his own soul he were conformed to it.

There is a further writing of the Law in the heart when the man of God is made to *appropriate that Law*—not only to approve of it, but to approve of it for himself. There are many people who approve of laws as far as they keep their fellow men in check, but they do not want laws for themselves. "Oh," says such a person, "of course everybody ought to be honest! My servants ought not to embezzle, they ought not to rob me, they ought to give me a good day's work for their wage." When the argument is turned round and the question is about giving a good day's *wage for the work*, then they talk about political economy—which means that it is absolutely necessary that men should be dishonest! That is the pith and marrow of that political science—that every man will be selfish and that there is no hope that people will be otherwise. A man speaks that which is not true and sees no evil in it! But if another should say anything against his character, that is a very different matter, it is quite unpardonable! He may walk through the earth and devour men's characters as much as he pleases—that, of course, is mere criticism such as we ought all to expect. But if *he* is touched and there is a word spoken against him, it is cruel and unkind, and ought to be put down at once! When God writes the Law in a man's heart, he takes the Law more to himself

than he applies it to anybody else and his cry is not, "See how my neighbors sin," but, "See how I sin!" His clamor is not against his brother's fault, but against his own fault. No longer does he look out for motes in other men s eyes, but he is most concerned about the beam which he is quite sure is in his own eye—and he prays the Lord to remove it.

But, Brothers and Sisters, the Law is not fully written in the heart till a man, approving the Law and appropriating it to himself, feels he delights to obey it. "There," he says, "O my God, my highest happiness lies in doing as You would have me to do. I do not want any excuse or indulgence for sin, I want, above everything else, to be holy! It shall be my greatest pleasure to be pure. It shall be my perfect bliss to be perfectly holy. You have so written Your Law in my heart that every time my heart beats, it seems to beat for holiness. All the inclinations of my new-born nature are towards right, towards Your Truth, towards goodness, towards God." This, dear Friends, is to have the Law of the Lord written in your heart so as to delight in it after the inward man and to delight to practice it with the outward man, daily striving to make the entire life to be in accordance with the dictates of God's will! O Brothers and Sisters, is it not a wonderful thing that God shall ever make it as natural for us to be holy as once it was natural for us to be unholy? And that then we shall find it as much a joy to serve Him as once we thought it a pleasure *not* to serve Him, when, indeed, to deny ourselves shall cease to be self-denial? It shall be enjoyment to us to be *nothing*! It shall be delight to renounce everything of self and to cling close to God, and to walk in His ways! Then will be fulfilled in our experience the promise of our text, "I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."

There is an old Latin proverb which says that "things that are written remain," and I quote that proverb, here, believing that it is intended in the text to teach us that when God's Law is written in our hearts, it is retained there. The lawyer always says, "You had better be careful what you say, but when you go to law, *never write* anything—hold back from the use of pen and ink, for that which is written remains." When God writes His Law in our hearts, He writes that which will never be blotted out! Once let Him take the pen in His hand and begin to write. "Holiness unto the Lord" right across a man's heart—and the devil, himself, can never remove that sacred line! So it is meant in our text as a part of the Covenant, that God will write, "holiness," so deeply upon the nature of His chosen people that they may sooner cease to be than cease to be holy! He will so put His Law into their hearts that you must tear their hearts out before you can tear out their conformity to the mind of God! Is not this a wonderful method of writing the Law in the heart? This is sanctification, indeed! May God work it in each one of you! And He will if you are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, for if you trust in Christ you are in the Covenant! And being in the Covenant, this is the promise concerning you, "I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people."

Thus have I spoken upon the meaning of this blessing.

II. Now, for a few minutes, I am going to speak upon THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS BLESSING IS GIVEN—the pens that God uses when He writes upon human hearts—for I want you to notice this interesting process.

First, God writes his Law upon His people's hearts with *the pen of gratitude*. He tells them that Jesus Christ loves them and gave Himself for them. He gives them a sight of the bleeding Savior and tells them that their sin is put away by His death. Then, in return, they love the Lord with all their heart, mind, soul and strength, The best way to make a man keep a Law of God is to make him love the Law-Giver. We thought at one time that God was a cruel tyrant, but we have learned that He is our loving Father. We could not have thought that He would have given His only-begotten Son to die as the Substitute for us, but now that He has done so, we love Him with all our heart. There is one way of writing the Law of God in our heart by giving us gratitude as the motive of a new life. The natural man's only motive for being good is, "If I am good, I shall go to Heaven. And if I am bad, I shall go to Hell." That is the slave's motive, but the child of God is no more a slave—he has been delivered from his former bondage. He says, "I am saved by Sovereign Grace, therefore I shall go to Heaven. I shall never go to Hell—that cannot be! I am God's chosen one, washed in the blood of the Lamb and—

'Now for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss!
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to His Cross.

Chosen, not for any goodness of my own, but entirely of the free and Sovereign Grace of God; tell me now what I can do to show my gratitude to such a gracious God." That is one way in which the Law of the Lord gets written in the hearts of His people.

Again, the Law is written in the heart by *repentance working hatred of sin*. Burnt children, you know, are afraid of the fire. Oh, what a horror I have had of sin ever since the day when I felt its power over my soul! It was enough to drive me mad when I felt the guilt of sin! It would have done so, I sometimes think, if I had continued much longer in that terrible condition. O Sin, *Sin*, I have had enough of you! You did never bring me more than a moment's seeming joy and with it there came a deep and awful bitterness which burns within me to this day! And now, being set free from sin, can I go back to it? Some of you, my Brothers and Sisters, came to Christ with such difficulty that you were saved, as it were, by the skin of your teeth. You were like Jonah. You had to come up from the bottom of the mountains—and out of the very belly of Hell you cried unto God! Well, that experience has made sin so bitter to you that you will not go back to it. The Law has been written in your heart with the steel pen of *repentance* and God has made sin to be a horrible evil to you!

Farther than that, and deeper than that, God also writes His Law upon the heart *in regeneration, wherein He creates in man a new and better life*. In regeneration, if I understand it at all, there is born in us a new nature. Our old nature is all sin and it will never be anything. You may doctor it as you will, but it is a body of sin and death, and it will always

remain so. But the new nature, which is born in us at our new birth, cannot sin because it is born of God! It is a living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever—and that new heart, that right spirit, from its very birth, from its very origin, from its very *nature*—has the Law and will of God engraved upon it. To the new nature, it is as natural to obey as to the old nature, it is natural to disobey. To the new nature, it is as much its element to live in holiness, as to the old nature, it is its element to live in sin. Thus, by regeneration, the Law of the Lord is written in the heart of His people.

Again, God writes His Law the more fully in the heart of His people *as they increase in knowledge*. The more we know of God, of this life, of the life to come, of Heaven and Hell, of the Person of Christ, of the Atonement and of every other subject that is taught us in the Scriptures, the more we see the evil of sin and the more we see the delights of holiness! Why, at the very first moment of his conversion, man is afraid of sin because of what he has seen of it, but as he begins to perceive how sin put the Christ to death, how sin dug the pit of Hell, how sin brought all the plagues and curses upon the human family and will continue to curse generations yet unborn—then the man says—"How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Trained and educated in the school of Christ, the more he knows, the more he delights in the Law and the will of God!

And farther than this, dear Friends, the Law is written in the heart as God makes the new life in us to grow and increase. Some Christians, I am sorry to say, have but little spiritual life. I spoke yesterday with a man of God who has been preaching the Gospel in the New Hebrides where, till lately, the people were cannibals and, by God's Grace, he has brought hundreds, if not thousands of the former savages to become Christians! And the good Brother, when he spoke of his hardships, said, "Ah, but you do not know, in England, the joys of those who preach to cannibals!" True, most of the missionaries who first went out were killed and eaten—and our friend escaped by the skin of his teeth! I looked at him again to hear what his special and peculiar joys were. "Oh," he said, "the joy of converting a cannibal to Christ is a greater blessing than can be known by you, who only bring ordinary people to the Savior! And," he added, "I tell you that there are no Christians that I know of that excel my converted cannibals. If you want to see the Sabbath sacredly kept, you must come into my place and see how these people who used to be cannibals keep it! Those who were accustomed to eat their fellow men, now never rise without prayer, and never sit at the table without asking a blessing. There is not a Christian household but has family prayer in it, morning and evening. These people walk with God," said the missionary, "and live close to Christ. And as I look at them, it seems such a joy to have been the means of bringing these cannibals to Christ."

I am afraid there are many nominally Christian people who are not half as good as those converted cannibals. What is the reason? It is because they seem to have God's life poured into them abundantly, while some among us have but little of it. Now, when a man gets the life of God

abundantly poured into him, he is sensitive against sin, for he has the Law of God written in his heart and, thereby, God has made his conscience—

"Quick as the apple of an eye."

He cannot bear to hear an ill word from others, or himself have an evil thought without being grieved and troubled. I have seen men who have professed to be Christians do many questionable things and yet never feel that they were doing any wrong. But as for the true Christian who lives near to God and who has been acting perfectly right as far as other people could judge, when he gets home, he begins blaming himself for something he did not do! As far as you can see, he has said and done the right thing, but he says, "No, I did not say it as earnestly as I ought to have said it. I did not do it as I ought to have done it." As for myself, I know that when I live nearest to God, I am most conscious of sin and I believe that in proportion as you get away from God, you will begin to think that you are perfect. But if you live in the light of the Lord, sin will be a daily plague to you and you will be crying for the precious blood to wash you and make you clean! It is the man who is spiritually blind who talks about his holiness. But it is the one whose eyes have been opened of God—the really holy man whom God has brought near to Himself—who still cries out, "Holier! Holier! Higher."—

"Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!
Even though it is a cross that raises me.
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to Thee!
Nearer to Thee!"

And this is how God writes His Law in His people's hearts, by giving them so much light that they become tender and sensitive at the very approach of sin!

And, once more, *communing with Christ* is the best way of getting the Law written in the heart. He who is with Christ from morning to noon, and from noon to dewy eve and who can say at night—

"Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,
I lay me down to rest,
As in the embraces of my God,
Or on my Savior's breast"

he is the man who will have the Law of God written in his heart. How can he sin whose garments smell of the myrrh and aloes and cassia of communion with Christ? How can he come out of the ivory palaces of fellowship with his Lord and then go and live as others do, and sin against his God?

Thus, you see, dear Friends, how it is that the Lord writes His Law in the hearts of His people.

III. I have but a minute or two in which to speak upon THE GREAT GRACE WHICH IS CONTAINED IN THIS BLESSING. I do not know a greater gift than this that even God can bestow—the gift of His only-begotten Son! "I will put My Laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."

O you poor Sinners, I may exhort you to keep the Law, but without the Spirit of God working within you, nothing will come of it! But if God puts His Law into your hearts, then you will keep it. Oh, that He might even now lead you to His dear Son that you might see His Law in the hand of Christ, and then feel that pierced hand dropping it into your heart to abide there forever!

The great Grace of this blessing lies here. First, *God does what man would not and could not do*. Man would not keep the Law. He refused to obey it, so God comes, in the splendor of His Grace, and changes his will, renews his heart, alters his affections so that what man would not do, God does! Man has also become so fallen that he cannot keep the Law. Sooner might the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, than he that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well. But what man cannot do, by reason of the perversity of the flesh, God performs within him, working in him to will and to do of His good pleasure. Oh, what amazing Grace is this, which while it forgives our lack of will, also removes our lack of power!

And, dear Friends, is it not a wonderful proof of Grace that *God does this without destroying man in any degree whatever*? Man is a creature with a will—a "free will" as they sometimes call it—a creature who is responsible for his actions. So God does not come and change our hearts by a physical process, as some seem to dream, but by a *spiritual* process in which He never mars our nature, but sets our nature right! If a man becomes a child of God, he still has a will! God does not destroy the delicate machinery of our nature, but He puts it into proper gear. We become Christians with our own full assent and consent and we keep the Law of God not by any compulsion except the sweet compulsion of love! We do not keep it because we cannot do otherwise, but we keep it because we would *not do otherwise* because we have come to delight, therein—and this seems to me the greatest wonder of Divine Grace!

See, dear Friends, how different is the Lord's way of working and ours? If you knock down a man who is living an evil life and put him in chains, you can make him honest by force—or if you set him free and hem him round with Acts of Parliament, you may make him sober if he cannot get anything to drink! You may make him wonderfully quiet if you put a gag in his mouth, but that is not God's way of acting! He who put man in the Garden of Eden and never put any palisades around the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but left man a free agent, does the same in the operations of His Grace. He leaves His people to the influences that are within them and yet they go right because they are so changed and renewed by His Grace that they *delight* to do that which once they loathed to do! I admire the Grace of God in acting thus. We would have taken the watch to pieces and broken half the wheels, and made new ones, or something of the kind. But God knows how to leave the man just as much a man as he was before his conversion and yet to make him so entirely a new man that old things have passed away, and all things have become new!

And this is very beautiful, too, that when God writes His Law in His people's hearts, He makes this the way of their preservation. When God's Law is written in a man's heart, that heart becomes divinely royal property, for the King's name is there and the heart in which God has written His name can never perish! Some years ago, my esteemed Brother, Mr. John B. Gough, out of his great love for me, sent me a very valuable walking stick. It must have cost him a large sum of money, for it was made of ebony and it had a gold head to it, with pieces of Californian quartz curiously worked into the head of the stick. I cannot say that it was of much practical use to me, but still I valued it as a present from Mr. Gough. One night a thief got into my house and stole my walking stick, and the man, of course, broke up the stick and took the gold from the head. He brought it down to a pawnbroker's not far from here. He had hammered and battered it as much as he could, but when the pawnbroker looked carefully at it, he saw the letters, "S-p-u-r-g-e-o-n."

"Oh," he said, to the man, "you stop a bit," which, of course, was just what the thief did not do! I got my gold back because my name was in it. Though the man hammered it, there was my name, and the gold was bound to come back to me—and so it did. Now, when the Lord once writes His name in your heart, He writes His Law within you. And though the devil may batter you, God will claim you as His own! Temptation and sin may assail you, but if the Law of the Lord is in your heart, you shall not give way to sin. You shall resist it, you shall be preserved, you shall be kept—for you are the Lord's.

This is the only way of salvation that I know of for any of you. First, you must be washed in the fountain filled with blood, and next, you must have the Law of God written in your inward parts. Then shall you be safe beyond fear of ruin. "They shall be Mine," says the Lord of Hosts, "in that day when I make up My jewels." Oh, blessed plan of salvation! May it be accepted by every man and woman here! And it can only be so by the work of the Spirit of God leading you to a simple trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust Christ to save you and He will do it, as surely as He is the Christ of God. God help you to trust Him now! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY. C. H. SPURGEON.

JEREMIAH 31:27-37.

Verses 27-33. *Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build and replant, says the Lord. In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But everyone shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge. Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I*

took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My Covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them, says the Lord: but this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, says the Lord, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. This is the central Truth of all Scripture. It is the basis of all Scripture. When Paul desires to set forth the Covenant of Grace, he appeals to this passage. Twice, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he bases an argument upon it, and after quoting it, adds, "Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us." Brothers and Sisters in Christ, under the first Covenant we are ruined! There is no salvation for us but under this new Covenant—therefore let us read to our joy and comfort what the promises and provisions of that new Covenant are.

34. *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.* Pardoned sin, as well as the change of nature, is implied in the writing of the Law upon the heart. Oh, what a privilege it is to be among these covenanted people! How shall we know whether we belong to them? The seal of the Covenant is faith in Christ—I mean the personal seal upon the heart and conscience. You believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are trusting alone to His atoning Sacrifice, then God is in Covenant with you, for Jesus is the Mediator of the new Covenant—and he who has Christ has the Surety of the Covenant—and he shall have, in due time, every blessing which that Covenant guarantees!

35-37. *Thus says the LORD, which gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divides the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of Hosts is His name: if those ordinances depart from before Me, says the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever. Thus says the LORD; If Heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the LORD.* Now Israel still stands as a people separate from all others and there is still before the literal seed of Israel a great and glorious future. But as for the *spiritual* Israel, who worship God in the Spirit and have no confidence in the flesh, God will sooner blot out the sun and moon than cast away His people, or any one of them. They shall all be His people and He shall be their God. He will preserve them and He will keep His Covenant with them forever and forever, blessed be His holy name, the name of Jehovah, the God of the Covenant which cannot be broken!

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.

HE RAN, AND HE RAN
NO 2507

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 7, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 2, 1885.

"But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him." Mark 5:6.

"But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Luke 15:20.

THESE two texts have a measure of apparent likeness—the man runs to Jesus from afar and the father runs to the prodigal from afar. They both run—and when two run to meet each other, they soon meet. When a sinner is running to Christ and the Father is running to the sinner, there shall be a happy meeting before very long, and there shall be joy in Heaven and joy on earth, too! I shall begin my discourse by noticing the case of the demoniac, whose story we read—"When he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him."

I. Using that narrative as a kind of parable, I would remark, in the first place, that we have, here, an emblem OF THE SINNER'S PLACE.

He is "afar off" from Christ and when, first of all, the Spirit of God begins to open his eyes to his own true condition, one of the chief difficulties in his way is the realization of his distance from the Savior. He begins to cry, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat!" The poor man feels as if there were a great and dreadful distance between him and the great Mediator—he can only see "Jesus afar off," as the demoniac did. He has not yet come to Christ, nor proved His wondrous power to bless.

I daresay there are some in this congregation who feel that they are "afar off" from the Lord Jesus Christ and, "afar off" from the great Father. You are "*afar off*" *as to character*. I am not going to bring an accusation against you, for your own heart and conscience accuse you. It is not necessary for me to describe your past life—if you are the person whom Christ has come to bless, then I know that your sin is always before you. You cannot hide it from yourself, it seems to be painted on your very eyeballs! You have to look at everything through the mist and haze of your past guilt and, consequently, everything looks dark and dreary to you. The very mercies which God gives you seem to accuse you of your ingratitude to your Benefactor and any denials of mercy, any chastisements that you are enduring, seem to you to be but premonitions of a coming doom, for you feel yourself to be, by your past life, very far off from Christ. He is perfect and you are full of sin! He is just and you are unjust! He is meek and lowly—you confess that you have been proud and

wayward! He is beloved of His Father, the beloved Servant of God, but you have derided God's Gospel and you have refused to obey Him. You are, indeed, far off from Christ! It seems to you that if Christ and the penitent thief made a pair, then you, also, might make a pair with your dying Savior, but not otherwise. You feel yourself to be unworthy to be in the same world with Him, much less to be in the same Heaven with Him.

Well, now, when our Lord went to Gadara, as far as I can see, He crossed the Sea of Galilee and endured that storm at night in order that He might heal *one man*—and He went back, again, well content when He had worked that one miracle! It may be that you are a man of that kind, as far off from any likeness to Christ as that poor lunatic was, and He may have come here at this good hour with the intent to save *you*. At any rate, His servant will go home as grateful as a man can be, if he is but made the means of saving one such sinner as you are. But, first of all, you must realize that this is your position—"afar off" from Christ as to character.

But what, perhaps, may appear to you to be even worse is that you seem to be "*afar off*" *as to any hope of salvation by Christ*. It may be that you have long been a hearer of the Gospel. When you were younger, it seemed as if the Kingdom of God had come near to you, but now, the older you grow, the less susceptible you are to holy influences. You used to weep under sermons—you can more easily sleep under them now! Time was when your rest was broken after some kindly admonition from a Christian friend. But now, perhaps, Christian friends scarcely ever admonish you because you have a sarcastic way of repelling what they say. And even while you are sitting here, you are moaning to yourself, "Some in this congregation may be converted, but I shall not be. The Lord Jesus Christ may come here and deliver some poor soul, but assuredly He will not deliver me. I am an off cast and an outcast—not, perhaps, by open sin—but by an inward hardening of my spirit till my soul has become like the northern iron and steel, and nothing can move me. I am far off from any hope that the Savior will ever bless me."

Well, now, let me say to you, dear Friend, that I am very sorry that it should be so with you, yet am I glad you are here when such a subject as this is being handled, for that Gadarene demoniac seemed to be about as hopeless a man as there was in all the country round about! Apart from Christ, his case was absolutely hopeless. They had, doubtless, used all the arts for the management of lunatics which they understood in those barbarous days, but no chains of iron, nor bands of brass could hold him—he could not be tamed, or kept in check. And yet, O blessed Christ, You could cross the stormy sea at midnight to save this one man! It may be that it is so with you, also, dear Friends, who are so far away from Christ in the misapprehensions of your lack of hope. Yet it may be that this very hour is the time when you are to be set free from the power of the devil and brought to sit at Jesus' feet, clothed, and in your right mind!

Some are also "*afar off*" *from Christ as to knowledge of Him*. They know but little of the Christ of God. They have heard His name. They have some dim notions about Him, but as yet they only see Him "afar off." In these days, when the Gospel is preached at so many street corners, and

when there is a sanctuary in almost every street, it is astonishing what gross ignorance there is about Him whom to know is life eternal—by knowledge of whom many are justified and without knowledge of whom men must perish eternally! O Friends, it is terrible to think that there are persons, well instructed in everything else, who know nothing about this salvation which God has provided for the sons of men! You hear them railing against the Bible and in almost every case the railer has never read the Book! You hear them speak against Christ and it is almost a proverb that those who speak most against Him are ignorant of the common facts of His life. They have not studied His Character, nor have they examined His teaching, yet they cast it all aside as if *they* were infallible and as if *they* were qualified to judge and to decide without hearing the case at all! This is a wretched mode of action, yet, if any of you who are here know but little of Christ, for all that I am glad you are here and I only trust that you may be led to do what this poor ignorant demoniac did! Though he must have known very little about Christ, yet he ran to Him and worshipped Him! A little knowledge, like the star of Bethlehem, may suffice to guide to Christ those who are willing to follow its light. A faint gleaming of what Christ is may burn and glow into a more complete and perfect knowledge of Him and by that knowledge you may be brought into the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free.

I will not keep you longer in describing the sad state of the sinner in being thus far from Christ, except to say that it may be possible that you feel far from Christ *because you do not feel as if you could get at Him*. You are so unspiritual that you say to yourself, "If Christ were on earth, I would walk till I dropped, but I would get to Him. And if I could speak with Him, so that He could hear my words and could answer me with actual vocal sounds—if I could see Him and He would look at me, I would spend the last penny I am worth and pass over any length of sea and land if I could but get at Him—but somehow I cannot.

"If it were a matter of touching the hem of His garment with my finger, I would push through the press to do it. If it were a matter of taking Him up in my arms, as Simeon took the young Child Jesus, I would do it, and do it with joy. But I do not know how to get to Him—it seems to be all mist and all cloud to me." I know what you mean, dear Friend, for I was in that state, once, and then, indeed, I also "saw Jesus afar off," and for a long while I could not get to realize that He was mine. Well, notwithstanding that feeling which possesses you, I shall speak to you, yet further, in the fond hope that you may imitate this poor man who must have been very much like you, only in a worse plight than yours, and it will be my prayer and desire that you may come running to Christ, as he did—and that you, also, may worship Him!

II. Now notice, secondly, THE SINNER'S PRIVILEGE—"He saw Jesus," though he only saw Him, "afar off."

Those of you who only see Christ in the distance, who do not know much about Him and cannot get at Him, do at least *know that there is such a Person*! You have heard and it is the best news you ever did hear, that the Son of God came down to live among men and took our flesh, and became Man of the substance of His mother, and though He died upon the Cross, yet He has risen from the dead and He still lives. You

have heard tell of all that. You have not thought of it as you ought to have done—you have not let it weigh upon your heart, or sought to understand all its holy lessons—but still, you have such a knowledge of Him that you have seen Him "afar off."

More than that, you have heard, and you believe that *Jesus has done great things for men*. You do not think much about what He has done, but still, it has come to your knowledge that He lived, loved and died that He might save men. You have often heard that on the Cross He made an expiation for human sin. And let me tell you that this is the choicest news you ever heard, or ever will hear! And the day may come when you will look at this Truth of God as the only star of hope in a night which otherwise must be eternal. I hope you will yet clasp that Truth of God to your heart as the brightest jewel and the rarest treasure you have ever met with.

And I believe, further, that some of you have caught the idea that *the Lord Jesus Christ is saving other people*. You have met with some whom you observe to be very much changed, greatly altered from what they used to be and, though you sometimes laugh at them, yet deep down in your heart you do not really mock them—you wish it were yourself! You have, after all, a respect for any one of these wonderful changes, called conversions, when you see them to be real and genuine—and you, perhaps, know some fellows with whom you work and, although you ridicule them, you know that they are better men than they used to be—and you admire the change. And there is a feeling in your inmost heart that though you cannot make out the mystery, there is still something in it. Yes, you can see Jesus, though I still grieve to say that you do but see Him afar off. You have, in your heart, some sort of belief that it may be possible that He will yet save you and there is some sort of humble desire in your soul that He will look your way and cast the devils out of you—and make you to be His happy servant.

But, once more, concerning the sinner's privilege, *Christ has come to the district where he is*. It is a horrible country, full of tombs and full of pollution—and the man has made it more horrible by his wildness and his madness—yet there is the Christ, Himself, treading that same Gadarene shore! He who is "mighty to save" has come into the land of death-shade! He who could cast out devils has come into the devil's own territory! He has come to beard the lion in his den. Herein, also, is the privilege of men today—the Lord Jesus Christ, who made Heaven and earth, is still among us—and will be with us to the end of this dispensation. He who could raise the dead and heal the lepers and cast out demons, is still here working by His Spirit! Though corporeally He is gone, yet in efficacious power to save He still lingers among us and His lingering means salvation to all who trust Him! Hear it, O sons of men, and as you hear it, may God bless the message to your souls!

III. What did this demoniac do when he saw Jesus afar off? That is the point to which we are coming and that will teach us THE SINNER'S WISEST COURSE—"He ran and worshipped Him."

I do not know that he did intelligently and after the right manner, worship Christ as the disciples worshipped Him. Perhaps at first, when he was up a hill, howling and cutting himself with stones, he spied a

boat come near the shore and he saw a single Stranger coming up from the boat, much as the natives of Erromanga saw John Williams landing on that cannibal shore—and his horrible instinct moved him to fly down at once to the beach, perhaps to attack the Man who dared, in open daylight, intrude on the wild man's domain. But as he approached nearer and nearer to this mysterious Stranger, quite a new feeling came over him. His steps grew slower, his fierce eyes beamed with a duller fire, the beast-like instinct became calm. The ravening wolf, the roaring lion within him began to tremble, for it perceived its Master—and when he had come near enough to get a fuller view of Christ, who stood there in simple majesty, calm and serene—the very opposite of the poor creature's mad fury—the man fell down at Jesus' feet and worshipped Him.

Then the devils within him spoke out and, using the man's voice, said, "What have I to do with you, Jesus, you Son of the most high God?" But for the moment it was the man, and not the devil, who prevailed! For an instant, what little relics there were of manhood made themselves felt and the man fell down and worshipped under the influence of the mysterious Presence of Christ. What I hope and trust may come of our consideration of this subject is that some big sinner here may have a lucid interval—that some mad sinner here, before the devil can speak, again, may have just a little quiet time, so that, though he may have come in here fresh from all manner of evil, yet for the moment he may feel a solemn calm steal over his spirit, a sacred hush that shall make him quiet as he has not been for many a day. I pray that some strange influence—strange to him up to this time—may draw him so that he shall run to Christ and fall at His feet and worship Him!

I am not, just now, saying anything about faith in Christ except that I do not believe any man worships Christ without having some faith in Him. I am just going to take this very low standard and say that this man, with all his madness, was wise in what he did—and the Spirit of God was leading him in the right direction when, breaking loose, as it were, from the devil's power for a moment or two, he ran to Christ and worshipped Him. And to any poor soul in like case, I would say—"I beseech you, for a minute or two, at any rate, worship the Christ of God whom I preach to you."

For consider that, first, *Christ is God as well as Man*, and, therefore, worthy to be worshipped. This poor demoniac was wiser than the Socinians or Unitarians of our day—he felt that there was more in Christ than in any mere man. Devil-possessed though he was, yet he fell down and worshipped Christ. And you, my Friend—you also know that Christ is God. Well, then, for a few minutes do yourself the justice to worship Him as God over all, blessed forever. If He shall never save you, yet He is worthy to be worshipped, for He is so great and so gracious. Therefore, let your mind be still for a moment and pay your homage before His feet. And from your very heart call Him, "Lord," and "God."

Besides, *Christ died to save sinners* and, being God, and having died to save sinners, I say to you, "Worship Him." I recollect the time when I was afraid that Jesus would never save me, but I used to feel in my heart that even if He did not, I must love Him for what He had done for poor sinners. It seemed to me, as I read the wondrous story of His life and

death, that if He spurned me I would still lie at His feet and say, "You may spurn me, but You are a blessed Christ, for all that and, if You curse me, yet I can only say to You that I well deserve it at Your hands. Do what You will with me, but You saved the dying thief and You saved her out of whom You did cast seven devils, but if You do not deign to save me, yet You are a blessed Christ, and I cannot rail at You, or find fault with You, but I lie down at Your feet and worship You."

Can you speak and act like that? Can you look up at Him through your tears and, as you see the nail prints in His hands and feet, and that great gash in His side, which reached His heart, can you not feel that you must lie at His feet and worship Him? Just waive all questions about yourself for a minute and think only of Him! Forget even your own sin for the time being and think of what He deserves, and now, at least, for the next few minutes, bow your soul reverently before the Christ of God and worship Him!

I think I may add that you may well worship Him because there is in that poor, flurried soul of yours, worried and confused and devil-ridden though it is, this thought—*that Christ alone can save you!* You do know *that*. Where else can you go but to Him? What other door is open to you? What other hand was ever pierced for you? What other side ever bled that it might give cleansing for your sin? Where lives there another person who loves as Christ has loved? Therefore, realize that He is unique, One altogether by Himself and while you cannot and will not worship others, yet, poor devil-possessed soul that you are, fall down and worship Him! Say to Him, "Lord, if my night never ends, yet will I look eastward, for there the sun will rise, if not for me. Lord, if I die of thirst, yet will I linger by the lone well in the desert, for if I ever drink at all, I must drink there. I can but perish if I linger at the Cross—and I am resolved to linger there. And if my blood shall stain that blessed tree, then even so it must be, for I am resolved—and it is my last resource—if I must perish, I will die here." O Soul, I am not telling you to do any great thing now, am I? I am not urging you to exercise any unreasonable confidence, but I do advise you to fall down and worship at my Lord's dear feet! Mad though you are, and your mad worship so poor and imperfect, yet, nevertheless, He will accept you and do great things for you!

For remember, next, that *Christ can save you.* Christ can save you! You have gone to the end of your tether, but you have not gone beyond the reach of His power! You have cut yourself and howled through many a dreary night, and snapped your chains and cursed the men that bound you. You have driven away friend and helper—and you are altogether undone—but, all the same, Christ can save you! What if the devil is in you? There is no devil in Hell, or out of Hell who does not tremble at Christ's Presence! Oh, that He would come and lay His cool hands upon your fevered brow and put His own life into your poor withered heart and make you live! He can save you—of that I am sure. I cannot speak as my Master can, but yet my Master can make these poor words of mine to bless and comfort you. And I pray that He may. This is the one thing that I bid you do—run to Him and worship Him!

IV. Now, turning to my second text, I must briefly remind you of THE SECRET HOPE FOR SINNERS—that while you are yet a great way off,

the Father, Himself, will see you, and will run to you! While you are running to His Son, the Father will run to you—and you and He shall meet in Christ—the only safe meeting place for God and man.

Turn your thoughts for a minute or two from that Gadarene demoniac to the prodigal son. He was coming back, you remember, and when he was a great way off, I should not wonder that his heart began to misgive him. "Oh," he seemed to say, "there is the old house!" He has reached the top of the hill and he can see it. He recollects those old trees under which he used to play with his brother and he thinks that he can spy out the very spot where he left his father and went that reckless journey into the far country. "I wonder what Father will say to me," he says. "I do not know how I can ever face him. I have treated him so badly that I must have broken his heart. I fear he is angry with me, and I do not think I can bear his wrath. I am ready to humble myself and say, 'Father, I have sinned,' but, oh, what a wretch I am! He will hardly know me. I do not look like the person I was when I left. What awful times I have been through since last I saw his dear face! I think I must run back again. Bad as it is to perish out in the far country, I do not think I can really face him." He is just turning back when, to his surprise, his father clasps him in his arms, for, "when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

O dear Hearts, if I knew there was a poor soul here beginning to seek the Lord, how glad I should be to speak with him! And there are some of my dear Brothers and Sisters here who are always on the lookout for any in whom there is the faintest beginning of a work of Grace! But, you see, we cannot see the germs of Grace as God can—we cannot spy out returning sinners as He can, for *God has far-reaching eyes* and if there is only half a wish to repent in any of your hearts, the Father sees it! If you only know that there is a Christ and that you would gladly worship Him, but you have not gone the length of really trusting Him and casting your souls upon Him, yet remember that when the prodigal was yet a great way off, his father saw him!

When God sees anything, His is a very different sight from yours or mine. We see a thing with our eyes and then we get a microscope and look through that, and see it very differently. But God, as it were, always sees everything microscopically and telescopically! He sees the whole of it, sees the very heart and soul of it. God at this moment sees all the sin of the whole of your life. He sees all your brokenness of spirit, all your doubts, all your fears, all the struggles against sin and all the strivings of His Spirit. He takes it all in with a single glance and comprehends and understands it all! And though you are a great way off, the Father sees you and He sees you with a father's eyes, too. How quick a father's eyes are when he looks at his boy who is ill! He spies out that hectic flush before the boy believes there is any trace of consumption in his countenance, for a loving father has a physician's eyes—and a mother's eyes are still more quick to perceive anything wrong.

Moreover, *God sees with compassionate eyes*—"His father saw him and had compassion" on him. The two things went together. I know a Sister in Christ who did me great good one day. I had helped a man many times, poor wretch that he was. I never clothed him but he sold the

garments in a day or two! I never helped him but he sank into deeper degradation than before and, at last, after he had been rigged out afresh from top to toe and a job found for him—and he was put into a position for getting on in life—he came here again. And when I saw him, I shrank back from him. I felt indignant with him, but our Sister—a better Christian than I—lifted up both hands and began to cry! The man was covered with vermin and he had evidently been drinking hard. As she lifted up her hands, she cried, "O poor creature, we have done all we can to save you, and you will go to Hell." And she stood and cried as if he had been her own child!

And I believe that is how God feels for poor sinners, for He cannot bear to see them act as they do. If you are coming back to Him, that is the compassionate way in which He is looking at you. He spies you out and, as Jesus wept over Jerusalem, so does the great Father weep over sinners, grieving that they will be so desperately wicked and foolish as to destroy their own souls! **V.** Now I must close, for our time has gone. The last point to be noticed is, THE ACTION OF THE SINNER'S FATHER.

No sooner did the Father see His son coming back than, "He ran." When God runs, it is quick running. "He ran, and fell on his neck." And when God stoops to fall on a sinner's neck, it is wondrous condescension! This is compassion like a God. "And kissed him." God's kiss is the essence of a million kisses all in one. One kiss from God is the soul of Heaven laid to the heart of a burdened sinner. "He ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him," and so the prodigal was received back into his father's family!

What I am longing for is that God's blessed Spirit may move some of you to run to Christ, if only in the poor way that I have set forth. Just for a few minutes, quietly worship Him, and while you are doing that, may the great Father come in with all His Omnipotent Love and put away your sin, and change your nature, and receive you into eternal union with Himself to the praise of the glory of His Grace! If I were to say ten thousand things, but God did not bless what I had said, all would be in vain. I hope that you do not need more words, but that you will come at once to Christ. Do not perish, I pray you, do not damn your own souls! There is enough misery in this world without incurring the miseries of the world to come! The Lord Himself says, "Turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die?" In the name of the bleeding Christ, seek His mercy even now! By His bloody sweat and crown of thorns, seek Him now! I know no better argument except it be by His death cry, "It is finished." Come to Christ! Look to Him and live, even now, and to Him shall be the praise forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGON:
MARK 5:1-24; 35-43.

Verse 1. *And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.* They had had a very eventful passage across that small but stormy sea, and Christ had proved Himself to be the Lord High Admiral of the seas. But now that He steps ashore, they are to see His power quite as distinctly displayed as upon the stormy waves.

2, 3. *And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains.* Those ancient graveyards were in remote places, for the people were too wise to bury their dead inside their cities. Very often the tombs were hewn in caverns in the sides of hills and rocks where the dead were laid. Of course, every man who touched a tomb was thereby ceremonially defiled, so that the tombs were fit places for an unclean person possessed by an unclean spirit. What a ghastly dwelling place! What a grim abode for the man and yet most fitting, for he was dangerous to all who passed by—a raving lunatic who could not be restrained by any bonds or chains that could be put upon him!

4, 5. *Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.* Poor creature! His howling must have been right hideous, indeed. Those who passed that way were startled by his unearthly cries, He was a terror to the whole district. Persons could not bear to live anywhere near the places where he resorted. "Night and day" he was a misery to himself and a terror to all around him—sad type of some whom we know, to our sorrow, who have gone madly into sin. It certainly is madness, whatever else it may be, and when madness and badness go together, what a terror such a man becomes!

6. *But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him.*— There is a wondrous attraction in the Person of our Divine Lord and Master. Though He was a long way off, yet a gracious magnetic influence proceeded from Him by which He drew this poor object of pity to Him. "When he saw Jesus afar off, He ran and worshipped Him."

7. *And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the most high God? I adjure You by God, that You torment me not.* Who was speaking then—the man, himself, or the devil within him? It is very hard to tell. The man and the devil were two personalities, but they were so effectually blended into one that it is scarcely possible to tell when it was the man speaking and when it was the devil. So, when sin enters into a man, it gets so completely into his very nature that, sometimes, we feel it must be the evil spirit speaking in the man—and yet it is not easy to be quite sure that it is so—and we cannot free the man, himself, from the guilt of his words and actions.

8. *For He said unto him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.* Whenever Christ speaks to the devil, His message is a very short and very sharp one. The Lord treats Him like the dog that Me is! "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit." Christ has no compliment for devils and it is a pity that some of His servants have such soft words when they are dealing with unbelief, which is but a devil, or one of the devil's demons.

9. *And He asked him, What is your name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.* The devil is obliged to tell his name when Christ treats him like a catechized child. And he is compelled to crouch before Christ like a whipped cur at his master's feet.

10. *And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country.* Satan clings to this world and to any place where he has had a signal triumph, as he had among those tombs and those rocky ravines.

11, 12. *Now there was near unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.* Such is the malice of these evil spirits, that they would rather do mischief among swine than nowhere! But notice their unanimity—with all the faults that can be laid at the door of demons, you cannot find them divided and quarrelling! They are unanimous in evil and it is a shame that those who are the followers of Christ should often be divided, whereas the kingdom of Satan is not divided against itself. Let us learn from our great enemy at least this one lesson.

13. *And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out and entered into the swine, and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand).* It was strange that there should be so many swine in the country where lived God's people, Israel. And as they had no right to be there, and were there contrary to Jewish Law, it was well that they should be destroyed.

13-15. *And were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus and saw him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.* Ah, me! How variously different people look upon the same thing! If you and I, who are Christ's disciples, had gone there and seen this poor lunatic fully restored, we would have been filled with holy joy! And we would have composed new hymns of praise in honor of the Great Physician who had cured him! But these people, in their alienation of heart from the Lord Jesus Christ, "were afraid." They feared and trembled in the Presence of Almighty Mercy! Omnipotent Love awoke no joy in their hearts, but the spirit of bondage was upon them.

16. *And they that saw it, told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.* You may be sure that they dwelt upon the latter part of the story, for the loss of the swine touched them more than the healing of the demoniac!

17. *And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts.* O dear Friends, let none of us ever get into such a state of mind and heart as to pray Christ to go away from us! Yet we have known people act in such a dreadful way as that—a person troubled in conscience has said, "I will never go and hear that preacher again! I cannot sleep at night after listening to him. I will never read such-and-such a book again, it disturbs me so that I cannot enjoy myself." This is, in effect, to pray Christ to depart out of your coasts! What? Is salvation worth so little that you have no care to possess it? Is Christ Himself so small a blessing that you even tremble lest He should change your nature and save you? I think there were more lunatics than one on that Gadarene shore—the people were all as mad at *heart* as that one poor man was mad in brain!

18. *And when He was come into the ship*—Christ will go from you if you want Him to go. He forces Himself upon no man—the Grace of God does not violate the will of man—it acts in accordance with man's nature

and achieves the Divine purpose without disturbing the individuality of the man. So Christ went from Gadara. "And when He was come into the ship."—

18. *He that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him.* Was not that a proper prayer? I think, dear Friends, that not only nature, but the man's new nature must have suggested this petition. He prayed Christ that he might be with Him. In our day it is very natural that as soon as we are converted, we should wish to go Home to Heaven. But what is the reason why we should not do so? It is in order that we may *bear witness* for Christ here on earth and gather in others unto Him!

19. *Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but said unto him, Go home to your friends, and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you, and has had compassion on you.* That is one of the chief points on which we ought always to speak—not only to tell of the greatness of the change which the Grace of God has worked in us, but especially to testify to the tenderness of God to us! Oh, how gently did He handle our broken bones! That good Physician of ours has a lion's heart, but He has a lady's hand! He does not spare us necessary pain, but He never inflicts even a twinge that is unnecessary. And, oh, the pity of His heart toward us when He sees the sorrow which our sin has brought upon us!

20. *And he departed and began to publish in Decapolis.*—In the ten little cities that were in that region. "He departed and began to publish in Decapolis."—

20. *How great things Jesus had done for Him: and all men did marvel.* This is the kind of ready-made preacher whose service for his Lord is usually most effectual. The man who, though he has studied little on many points, yet knows *by experience* what the Grace of God has done for him, and keeps to that one theme, and tells out the story with simple untrained eloquence, is the man who will do much for his Master! As we read here, "all men did marvel." If he had plunged into deep doctrinal subjects, it may be that men would have ridiculed him, but inasmuch as he spoke of what he knew and told of the greatness and graciousness of God, "all men did marvel."

21, 22. *And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto Him: and He was near unto the sea. And, behold.*—Wherever we see that word, "behold," it is like our nota bene, saying to us, "Mark well what is coming." "Behold"—

22-24. *There came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jarius by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet, and besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lies at the point of death: I pray You, come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed Him and thronged Him.*

35, 36. *While He yet spoke, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Your daughter is dead: why trouble you the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.* I can imagine that if Jarius had not been a man of much faith, he would have looked at the Savior with a meaning glance, as much as to say, "'Only believe?' Could You ask more of me when my child is dead? Yet

You bid me, 'Only believe.'" But, Brothers and Sisters, here is the very sphere of faith! Where there is no wading, there must be swimming—and where there is no hope in the creature, then we must throw ourselves upon the Creator. So, the child's death made room for the father's faith.

37-39. *And He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when He was come in, He said unto them, Why make you this ado, and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleeps.* She was dead, but not dead as far as Christ's intention was concerned. She was not so dead as to remain dead. He meant, soon, to bring her back again to life and, therefore, to Him it was as if she were but sleeping.

40. *And they laughed Him to scorn.* What a wonderful picture this must have been—The Lord of Glory in the center of a ribald crew who laughed Him to scorn! But it is not the man who is laughed at who is necessarily contemptible, it is often the *laughers* who are the most deserving of scorn. It was so, here, in Christ's day, and it has often been so since.

40. *But when He had put them all out.* They were not worthy to be answered in any other fashion.

40-42. *He took the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with Him, and entered in where the damsel was lying. And He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi, which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto you, arise. And straightway the damsel arose and walked, for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.* How very often persons were "astonished" in Christ's day! Sometimes it is put, "they marveled." At other times, "they were amazed," or, "they wondered." It would have been well if wonder had always turned to faith—but sometimes it corrupted into hate! God grant that our wonder at Christ may always be of that kind which crystallizes into love!

43. *And He charged them strictly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.* Life must be nourished. Young life, especially, needs frequent food. If Christ has spiritually quickened your child, see that you feed the child with convenient food. If you have won a convert to Christ in the Sunday school, take care that the unadulterated milk of the Word is brought forth, that the new-born child may be fed and nourished till it comes unto the perfect stature of a man in Christ Jesus!

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

"BEAUTIFUL FOREVER"
NO. 2508

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 14, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"He will beautify the meek with salvation."
Psalm 149:4.

I FIND that the text bears other interpretations. I will mention two of them. It might be read—and I think correctly—"He will beautify the *afflicted with deliverance*." Let me speak about that meaning first of all, for it is worth retaining. God's own people are frequently made to mourn. Their Lord takes pleasure in them, but yet, for their good, He often sends them grief. At times they are distressed and their enemies appear to triumph over them. They are brought into sore straits and burdened and surrounded with difficulties, but, though "many are the afflictions of the righteous," "the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken."

The day will come, dear Friend, when your cheeks, all fouled with weeping, shall be washed and made fair to look upon. Your eyes may be weary with waiting and watching, and red with weeping, but that weeping shall endure only for a night. "Joy comes in the morning," as surely as the morning comes after the night! Bear your sorrows bravely, for they are appointed by your Heavenly Father in supreme wisdom. Bear them joyfully, for they will bring forth to you the peaceable fruits of righteousness. You shall not be losers by your trials, you shall be gainers, and when your face has been washed by the rolling billows of the briny wave, you shall lift up your head and your countenance shall seem more beautiful than if it had not been thus submerged. You shall come up from your sorrows like the sheep from the washing in the days of the shearing. You shall be made white as snow through these very trials which now so sorely distress you. Therefore, I say, anticipate the joys of the future and let not the grief of the present quite swallow you up! Think not so much of the stormy sea that you traverse today as of the sunny shore upon which you soon shall stand, never to be tempest-tossed again!

There may be at this moment but a step between you and Heaven—you cannot tell how soon you may get away from all that worries you—you do not know how near you have come to the gate of pearl. Oh, did you know it—did you know that within a month your hands shall strike the harps of joy and wave the palm branches of victory, and the pure white raiment shall be about you, and the immortal crown shall deck your brow—did you but know all this, you would very patiently plod on through the few weeks of trial that would remain to you here! Remember

that you are going Home and that your home of bliss is *eternal*! Therefore, comfort one another with the words of our text as they are thus rendered—"He shall beautify the afflicted with deliverance." You shall come again rejoicing, for "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Another rendering of our text which also seems to be accurate, is this—"He will beautify the meek with *victory*." This is a very wonderful expression. In this world, as a rule, it is not the meek who appear to get the victory—they are trod on and trod down, and a meek-spirited man is often much despised among his fellow men. Therefore, when Moses writes of himself, "The man Moses was very meek," I do not see the least reason why he should not have written it, though many think it would have been impossible. But, indeed, in that age and now, also, it is not self-praise but rather *self-humiliation* to confess that you are meek! When a man is not willing to go to war when others clamor for it. When the sacred honor of this dignified country needs that we dip our spears in blood, it is with a sneer that a man is called "white-livered and meek." And if he, himself, were to say, "Yes, I am meek," there would be no *pride* in that confession, for the most of men would count that he was confessing to a weakness! Therefore I think that Moses might deliberately write, "the man Moses was very meek," for nobody would accord him any honor for such a declaration in that age and not very much, even, in this age, for *men* have not yet come to value meekness as *God* values it, but still look upon it as a kind of cowardice. They like a man who goes about the world with his fist always doubled, ready to knock down everybody who dares to think that the braggart is not the king of all his fellows. They admire the great hero who will not have anything said or done against his superlative dignity and, although that pride is earthly, sensual, devilish, yet there are many who admire it. And when it goes by the name of "British pluck," then, probably, "a mean-spirited man" is the mildest appellation that they give to one who is really meek!

Now, the Lord, seeing that those who are truly meek would have to battle for it, and would be persecuted, and even cast out by their fellows, has given them this gracious promise, that, "He will beautify the meek with victory." The victory of the man who gives a kiss for a blow is not the thing desired by most men, today, but the Lord will beautify the meek with victory! The turning of the cheek, instead of rendering rafting for railing, does not appear to give the promise of victory, but the promise is true, "He will beautify the meek with victory." In the day when our King's white horse shall be brought forth from its stable and the meekest of all men, clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, shall ride forth at the head of the heavenly armies, the meek of the earth shall follow Him on their white horses, too, for that shall be the true triumph which Jehovah, the King of Kings, shall give to them at the last! Inasmuch as they have little victory set to their account among their fellow men, they shall have it in that Day when angels, principalities and powers shall look down with delight upon the conquest accorded to gentleness—and sing and clap their

hands with holy exultation! Therefore, Beloved, bear and forbear, be gentle and lowly, remembering this blessed promise, "He will beautify the meek with victory."

But now, taking the text as it stands in the Authorized Version, "He will beautify the meek with salvation," there is a pretty thought which comes to me out of the position of my text, "Jehovah takes pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation." You remember that Jacob had 12 sons and he had a measure of love to all his offspring, so "the Lord takes pleasure in His people." But there was one among his children whom Jacob loved better than all the rest, and that was Joseph—and how did he show his love to Joseph? It was not in a fashion that you and I would follow, but according to the Oriental method it was the correct one. Because he loved him above the rest of his sons, he adorned him with a coat of many colors. Now read the text in that sense, "He will beautify the meek with salvation." They shall have the coat of many colors, they shall be beautified with salvation because, out of all the Lord's people, He takes most pleasure in those who are of a meek and quiet spirit. These are most like Jesus and, inasmuch as the Father delights best in the Well-Beloved, He delights, also, in those who are most like He. He sees in them the image of the Only-Begotten and He takes special pleasure in them and beautifies them with salvation.

I shall try to speak, first, concerning the *character to be aimed at*, that is, meekness. Secondly, of the *favor to be enjoyed*—"He will beautify the meek with salvation." And thirdly, if we have time, we shall think of the *good results to be expected*—the advantages which come out of being beautified with salvation.

I. First, then, let us think of THE CHARACTER TO BE AIMED AT. Who are these meek people? Who are those whom God will beautify with salvation?

I am afraid we are not all meek, perhaps not all who are God's people have yet learned to be meek and lowly. But this is what they all *ought* to be and, therefore, let us hold up the perfect Law of the Lord to you that you may look into it until, by looking in it you shall be transformed into the image you desire to reach.

What is this meekness? I should say, first, with respect to our relation towards God, meekness means *entire submission to the Divine will*. The meek, whom God will beautify with salvation, are a people who do not quarrel with God. They have left off that pernicious habit. They do not find fault with God's teaching. What they read in God's Word they are willing to believe without asking any questions. They see, there, much that is mysterious, but if God conceals the meaning of it, they believe that it is to His Glory to have it concealed, and they do not attempt to pry within the veil. There is much in God's Word that is difficult—they are not sorry for that, for there is so much more room for the exercise of their faith! They do not expect to be as God—he who could fully understand God must be, himself, a god! These meek people are satisfied to be the children of God. And as the children of a man do not expect to understand all that their father says, but are willing to believe very much

which they cannot comprehend, so is it with the children of God who are meek and teachable. They open their hearts for the Lord to write His Truth thereon and they do not say, "We cannot receive *this*," or, "We cannot accept *that*." It is written, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord," and it is so in a very special sense with God's meek children—they submit themselves to His teaching.

They submit themselves to God's chastening as well as to His teaching. If he scourges them, that scourging is no more pleasant to them than it is to others, but they do not resist the rod, but ask that it may be sanctified to them and they prepare themselves to endure all the will of God. There are some nominally Christian people who quarrel a great deal with God—some who have lost friends and they have never forgiven the Lord for taking them away—some who have become poor and they have a standing grudge against the Most High because He has dealt with them as He has done. This kind of conduct brings no good to anybody and it often causes increased suffering. The more the ox kicks against the goad, the deeper is the sharp point driven into its flesh. Our sorrows are multiplied tenfold by our rebellions! If we were not only resigned, but actually acquiescent to the Divine will, we would not smart nearly as much as we do. This, then, I take it, is part of what it is to be meek—to be perfectly submissive to Divine teaching and to Divine chastening.

If a man is truly meek, he yields himself up to all the influences of the Spirit of God. You know that if you see a cork out in the river, if there is but a tiny ripple, it moves. If there is only a breath of wind, it goes up and down at once. But if some great ship is lying there, it does not stir, it stays quite still. I daresay you think, "I want to be just as responsive to the Divine will as that cork upon the surface of the stream is to every movement of the water. I wish to be as the feather that is wafted by the breath of God whichever way He pleases. Oh, that He did but will anything, and that I did it at once! Oh, that He did but speak, yes, oh, that *before* He spoke, I might catch the very glance of His eyes and do what He desires!" His promise is, "I will guide you with My eye," and He says, "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near to you." Oh, to be so meek as to feel at once the motion of the Spirit of God upon the soul—and to yield oneself to it, as the plastic clay that can be molded into any shape by the potter's fingers. The Lord make us such—for these are the people whom He will beautify with His salvation!

I have spoken of meekness towards God, but those who are truly meek are also *gentle towards their fellow men*. I wish that all Christians had this character and that they might not be rough, overbearing, proud, and intimidating as some are. There are some who seem to think that nobody would esteem them if they did not kick everybody as they went along. They seem to fancy that all other people as well as themselves are made of iron and that their power will not be known unless they dash themselves against all who come near them! But it should not be so among the children of God. Oh, that we might learn that holy courtesy which is one of the true marks of a Christian! Oh, that we might have a tender re-

gard for other people's feelings because we have a fellow-feeling with them and that we might pass through the world, not anxious to be noticed, but rather to be *unnoticed!* Not desirous to be great, but willing to be *little*, eager rather to wash the saints' feet than to have them crown our heads, desirous not so much to be ministered to as to *minister*, for true greatness lies in the sacrifice of self for the good of others! Remember how our Lord said to His disciples, "Whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant"? This is always the rule in the Church of Christ—God makes it to be so, though it seems not according to the usual bent of human nature. The Lord takes great delight in those who are of such a meek, quiet, humble and lowly disposition.

These meek people bear, and forbear, and forgive, even though they have just cause for resentment. For a man to be good-tempered when he is never provoked is no great credit to him. It has been said that the devil himself is good-tempered when he is pleased—and I daresay he is. But for a man who is much provoked, for one who is foully slandered, for one who wishes to do good, but who is misrepresented in all that he does—for such a man to still feel, "It really does not matter. I shall not take any notice of it. I wish I had not even observed it. It is for me to be just as kind as ever I was to those who are most ungrateful—in fact, to heap coals of fire upon the head of him who does me injury, and to do the more good to those from whom I receive the most ill"—this is the way to go through the world feeling that you will not take offense at anything that people say or do! It takes two to make a quarrel and if I will not quarrel with you, then you cannot quarrel with me! Blessed are these peacemakers who keep the peace, themselves, by readily forgiving the wrong done to them by others.

They, also, are meek who can continue to love with much perseverance. To love the unlovely—this is the love which the Spirit of God works in our hearts! To love those who are not only unlovely, but actually unloving, and who return evil for our good and cursing for our blessing—this, indeed, is to be a child of God!

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, I have shown you who the meek are towards God, and towards men. Will you judge whether you deserve that title? Such people are also *lowly in themselves*. "Oh!" says one, "I will try to be meek." No, my Friend, do not *try* to be meek, because he who is meek is meek without trying! I do not know anything that is more nauseous than the attempt some people make to be amiable, Their pride pokes out at every corner and though they try to be very gentle, there is no real gentleness in them and, consequently, it cannot come out of them! Dear Friend, will you learn this lesson? You are a poor sinner—therefore, be meek. You may well forgive others, for you have good cause to ask others to forgive you. You may well be patient with those who provoke you, for you have often provoked your God, yet He has been wondrously patient with you. You may well put up with affronts from your fellows, for who are you, after all? If you have a right idea of yourself, you are so little and so inconsiderable, that whoever affronts you, affronts a mere nobody—so it does not matter! Whoever treads on you does but

tread upon the dust, for you are dust—so who shall blame him? "You are setting us hard lessons," says one. I know that I am! And unless the Lord shall teach you, you will never learn them! It takes a long time to put out the fierce fires of pride—and when you think you have really become meek and lowly in heart, it is sadly surprising how, with a little breath, the ashes begin to glow—and soon the old fires are burning up again! Some people say, "You know, it is a natural pride," as if its being a natural pride made it any better! Oh, that God would tread out the last spark of it, so that we might obey that blessed command of our Lord, "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."

II. Having described the truly meek people, now let us consider, in the second place, THE FAVOR TO BE ENJOYED BY THEM. God says that "He will beautify the meek with salvation."

It is a circumstance worthy of your notice that there are mentioned in Scripture three men whose faces shone. I do not recollect more than three. The first was Moses, the man who was very meek, and you remember how it is recorded that his face shone so that he had to put a veil over it. God had beautified that meek man. Another of the meek ones was Stephen, whose dying prayer for his murderers proves how meek and forgiving he was. It is written of him that when he was accused before the council, they "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." This was the second meek man. And the third was—but you long ago anticipated me—and wondered that I did not mention Him first! Not only did His face shine, but His whole Person shone and His garments were whiter than any fuller could make them—that was our blessed Lord, who could truly say, "I am meek and lowly in heart."

See, then, how God puts the beauty of His own brightness upon meek men! Not upon great men. Not upon those who profess to be great. Not upon obstinate and hard-hearted men. I do not think that even Elijah, great as he was, ever had that beauty upon him. And John the Baptist, though the greatest in the former dispensation, had not that beauty upon him. There is a certain sublimity of roughness about the two Elijahs, but the meek have the beauty of the Lord, our God, upon them. That very softness and, what some men think the weakness of their character, is the background upon which God throws His brightness, so that they become beautiful in His sight. "He will beautify the meek with salvation."

What is this beauty that God puts upon the meek? O dear Friends, there are some of you who would like to be beautiful—"beautiful forever," I have no doubt. There have been silly women who have been trapped with those words as an advertisement—but my advertisement is a true one! Here is the way to be beautiful forever—"He will beautify the meek with salvation."

The Lord beautifies the meek, I think, in this way—He puts into them a *peace of mind* which fiery spirits never have—and which quick spirits do not know. They are not easily ruffled or disturbed. They have, as others have, much to annoy them, but they are so put into Christ that they

cannot be put out. They are rendered so deeply calm, so solidly patient by the indwelling of the Spirit of God, that they bear without seeming to bear—and that which would crush another seems to have no weight with them. The deep peace of mind of a truly meek Christian is, I think, a very beautiful thing.

Over and above that, these meek people have a *delightful contentment*. Whatever happens to them, they accept it as God's will. "Good day!" said one, and the other said, "Sir, I never had a day that was not good, for God arranges all." "Oh!" said the first speaker, "but it is good weather today." "Ah!" was the reply, "but whatever weather comes, to me it is good, for God sends it and I am happy, let it be what it may." When self rules, you are never pleased. It is too hot for some of you today, is it not? Not many months ago it was too cold. When it rains, though it is raining bread from Heaven for millions of people, you cry out in a fret, "What a pity it is such a wet day!" And when the sun shines, you would like to be delivered from the burning heat, though that heat is ripening the corn for man and the grass for the cattle. He that will not be pleased with God is never pleased with himself. But he that is of a meek and quiet spirit goes through the world feeling that all is right, whatever comes, and he continues to praise and bless the Lord. I have known some Christians of this sort—I wish I could say that I knew more. There was a dear man of God, an elder of this Church, who, when he came to me one Lord's-Day morning, when I was half-choked with a horrible November fog, said cheerfully, "Dear Pastor, may we have a happy Sabbath today! It is foggy outside—may it be all bright within! I hope the Lord will strengthen you to be full of holy courage because some people may feel dull through the bad weather. At any rate, let us rejoice and be glad in our God." I have some such Friends around me, now, thank God, but may we have many more!

Sometimes, God puts upon the meek the beauty of *great joy*, as if the light of Heaven shone right through them. The light that God has kindled in their hearts shines through their faces and you can see that they are among the happiest of men because God has beautified them with salvation!

Then He puts upon these meek people a beauty of *holy character*. I daresay you know some persons of this sort, as I rejoice to say that I do. I always feel that it is a great honor to be in their company. They are not very famous people, or very clever people—they will never do very much which the world will notice and put in the papers—but when I get near them, I seem to be like a ship that has entered the harbor, or that has come under a huge bluff where it is sheltering from the wind that is blowing out at sea. They are so good and so gracious that it is a blessing to be with them! I was with such an one this week and I looked up to the truly grand old man with the utmost reverence as he spoke of what God had done for his soul in foreign lands, and of how the Lord had helped him to bear hardship and trial for Christ's sake. I experienced a great delight as I listened to his holy words and felt the unction that rested upon him. Dear Sister or Brother, God can make *you* just such a saint as that!

He can make you to be full of holiness so that everybody who comes near you will see that there is a Divine beauty upon you! That is poor beauty which consists merely in bright eyes and rosy cheeks, or in the fair whiteness of the lily that will fade like the lily or like the rose. But that beauty which God puts upon us by the Grace that shines from *within*—the beauty of holiness such as there was upon Christ—*this* we ought to cultivate, praying to God to fulfill in us the promise of the text and to beautify us with His salvation!

As men and women who are what they ought to be in Christ, grow old, their temper mellows and their *whole spirit ripens*. There are some godly matrons and some venerable men whose words are most weighty and wise—you cannot hear them speak without remembering their very tones, for there is a long and deep experience at the back of their testimony. When I listened to George Muller, some years ago, I do not think there was very much in what he said if I took the words apart from himself. But then it was George Muller who said it, with that holy blessed life of faith at the back of every word—I was like a child, sitting at a tutor's feet, to learn of him! I pray God to make you, my Brothers and Sisters, men and women of that sort! May He not only save you, but beautify you with salvation! May He not only make you penitent, but make you meek! May He not only take you to Heaven, but bring Heaven down to you and pour it into your soul that you may begin to enjoy the bliss of Heaven even while you are here below!

III. So I come to my last point, which is, THE GOOD RESULTS TO BE EXPECTED—the advantages which come out of being beautified with salvation. If you and I, by God's Grace and the power of His Spirit, become truly meek and are beautified with His salvation, this will be the result of it all.

First, *God will be glorified*. God was not glorified by you, Brother, when you made that fiery speech the other night. You were very zealous, I know, but you used some very strange language and God was not glorified by it. Sometimes, in a dispute, a person who does not know anything about the quarrel can tell which of the two is right by seeing which one controls his temper the better. Use hard arguments, Brother, hard arguments but *soft words*. And if you can get the two together, you will win the victory! If we are not meek, we do not adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. But if we are meek, then God is glorified.

Further than that, by our meekness *Christ is manifested*. When a man can bear provocation and does not utter an angry word, then those who are round about say within themselves, "That is the spirit of Christ." They cannot see Christ, Himself, for He has gone into Glory, but when they see the meek Believer, they say, one to another, "Surely that must be something like what Christ was when He was here below." God grant that you, dear Friends, may be living photographs of your Divine Lord!

I feel sure, too, that this meekness *makes a Christian attractive*. Your high and mighty man is not wanted in any company. Here is one who is wonderfully good in his own estimation—he is so holy that he cannot mix with his fellow men! You feel, when he comes into the room, "Here comes

the perfect man—let us get out of the way. He is so superlatively good that he will make some of us feel very bad before long, for we do not like holiness set in that kind of frame." I know some people who seem as if they meant to make religion as objectionable as ever they could—and as if they had attained to a high degree of Christianity when they had made everybody dislike them—but it should not be so! O Brothers and Sisters, we must be meek and be beautified with salvation, for then we shall be able to attract others to Christ! If we want to draw them to Him, we must let them see how sweetly blessed is the Christian life and how a man can be sternly upright and yet, at the same time, be blessedly cheerful! How he can be dead against sin and yet full of holy love to the sinner—how he would not, to save his life, budge an inch from that which is right and true and yet would give his life away if, by blessing another, he might bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ!

The Lord beautify us thus with salvation and great good will come of it. May the Lord grant to some of you, who are not meek, but the very reverse, that you may come under the touch of His renewing Spirit and be born again! Then will you be capable of becoming truly meek—and then will God beautify you with His salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SURGEON:
PSALM 149; MATTHEW 5:1-12.

Psalm 149:1. *Praise you the Lord.* This is a Hallelujah Psalm. It begins with, "Praise you the Lord," and finishes in the same way. It is a complete circle of praise. The long streams of the Psalms end in glorious cascades of hallelujahs. One after another these jubilant notes roll out, as in Handel's magnificent Hallelujah Chorus.

1. *Sing unto the LORD a new song, and His praise in the congregation of saints.* There was an old song previous to this new one—in the 148th Psalm—the Psalm for sun and moon and stars, for deeps and dragons, for old men and maidens, and so on. But this is a Psalm for *saints*, so it is "a new song" for the new creation. Therefore, let all the new creatures of God sing it from their hearts!

2. *Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him.* This is the best and highest form of creation—the making, not only of men, but of men of God, the making of Israels, the making of prevailing princes.

2. *Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.* Let them rejoice that their Maker reigns, that He rules over them, and that He rules over all things—"Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King."

3. *Let them praise His name in the dance: let them sing praises unto Him with the timbrel and harp.* That is, let them repeat the joy of Israel at the Red Sea, when Miriam "took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances; and Miriam answered them, Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously." So, O you children of God, let the praises of your God and King ring out as with the music of the timbrel and harp!

4. *For the LORD takes pleasure in His people.* Then, should not they take pleasure in Him? If He looks upon them with Divine delight, should not they look up to Him with adoring gratitude? What is there in us to give Him any pleasure? But if His delights are with the sons of men, surely the sons of men should have their delights in Him—"For the Lord takes pleasure in His people."

4, 5. *He will beautify the meek with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory.* Let them glory in God and be joyful in Him. Let their spirits seem to rise even beyond Grace up to the anticipation of Glory—"Let the saints be joyful in glory."

5. *Let them sing aloud upon their beds.* If they are sick, or if they lie awake at night, or if they have enjoyed sweet rest, let them not fail to praise God for it—"Let them sing aloud upon their beds."

6. *Let the high praises of God be in their mouth and a two-edged sword in their hand.* But let it be a *spiritual* sword, that two-edged sword of God's Word which will cut through coats of mail. And as they wield it, let them ever rest satisfied that victory shall surely be theirs. One of the poetical versions of this Psalm rightly renders this verse—

"You saints of the Lord; as round Him you stand,
His two-edged sword, His Word, in your hand,
To sound His high praises your voices employ!
To victory He raises, and crowns you with joy."

7. *To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people.* So they had to do in those old times. But we, happily, have not to do so, now, except it is in a *spiritual* sense that, with the sword of God's Word we are to cut down the idols of the heathen and subdue the nations to our King.

8. *To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron.* Reading the passage in a Gospel sense, we lead men captives in the bonds of love that are stronger than fetters of iron! O soldiers of Christ, army of the living God, this is the battle you have to fight—be this your victory, too!

9. *To execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all His saints. Praise you the LORD.* So the Psalm ends upon its keynote—"Hallelujah." "Praise you the Lord.' Now let us turn to the 5th chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew and see what we have to rejoice in there.

Matthew 5:1. *And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him.* You notice that the Preacher sat down and that His disciples stood around Him. If you find it somewhat warm and trying, tonight, remember that you have the best of it, for you *sit* while the speaker stands! Concerning our Lord, we read, "When He was set, His disciples came unto Him."—

2. *And He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying.*—Perhaps someone says, "He could not have taught them without opening His mouth!" I have found that a great many try to teach without opening their mouths, but the earnest preacher speaks with all his might. So did Jesus in the open air on the mountain side—"He opened His mouth and taught them." Such grand things as He had to say ought to come from

open portals, so He mumbled not, but, "opened His mouth, and taught them, saying."

3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the Kingdom of Heaven.* "Blessed." See how Jesus begins His Sermon on the Mount? He begins with benedictions! He is a cloud that is full of rain and that empties itself upon the earth. The moment you begin to know Christ, you begin to have blessings! And the more you know of Him, the more blessed you will be. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Not those who boast themselves of spiritual riches and personal goodness, but the lowly, the meek, the trembling, the humble, the poor in spirit, "for their's is the Kingdom of Heaven."

4. *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.* Let them now be comforted in the prospect of future comfort. There are no mourning hearts that mourn over sin and mourn after God that shall be deserted by their God—"they shall be comforted."

5. *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.* They do in the truest sense enjoy even this life—their contented spirit makes them monarchs. The great man, with all his wealth, is often uneasy with a craving ambition for more, but the quiet spirits of God's people find a kingdom everywhere. The mountains and the valleys belong to him who can, with happy eyes, look upon them and then lift his face to Heaven and feel, "My Father made them all."

6. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.* They want to be better. They are hungry and thirsty after more holiness. They boast not of personal perfection, they are hungering and thirsting after *righteousness*, but they have not attained to it yet.

6. *For they shall be filled.* God will fill them and when He fills men with His fullness, they are full, indeed!

7. *Blessed are the merciful.* The forgiving, the generous, the kind. "Blessed are the merciful."

7, 8. *For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.* There is such a connection between purity of heart and purity of understanding that the man whose eyes are clarified by holiness shall see God!

9. *Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.* They shall not only be the children of God, but people shall *call* them by that name. There is something so God-like in trying to put away discord, to remove anger and to promote love that it makes men feel that peacemakers must be the children of God.

10, 11. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake.* It is not when men truthfully speak evil concerning you, but when they say it *falsely*. Not when they say evil against you because of your ill temper which provokes them, but when they do it falsely, for Christ's sake, then, "blessed are you."

12. *Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.* And

you are treading in their steps, so you are entering into their heritage. You have your beginning with them and, 'you shall have your end with them. If persecuted with them, you shall also reign with them.

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

THE SINFUL MADE SINLESS
NO. 2509

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 21, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 12, 1886.

"Whoever commits sin transgresses also the Law: for sin is the transgression of the Law. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin."
1 John 3:4, 5.

NOTE, beloved, the special character of Believers—their Divine relationship, their heavenly privilege—they are called, "the children of God." There is a foolish dream about the Divine Fatherhood toward *all men,* but it is a figment, a fiction, a delusion, a deception. The Fatherhood of God is toward as many as He has begotten again unto a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead—these are His children. As for the rest of mankind, they are heirs of wrath, even as others. It is the special manner of God's love that we are bidden in this chapter to "behold" as a wonder, because He has bestowed this "manner of love" upon us, "that we should be called the sons of God." And that He has not bestowed this love upon all men is evident, for it is added, "therefore the world knows us not because it knew Him not."

So, you see, out of the special privilege of God's children there grows a special position which they are called to occupy. They are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. They become a holy people, separated unto God. I say not that *all who profess* the Christian name are so—that is what they *ought* to be, but it is to be feared that many of them have not yet reached this standard. But true Believers, the twice-born, have been regenerated by the Spirit of God. These are not of the world and the world does not understand them. They are aliens and foreigners—their manners and customs, their modes of thought and their motives are all contrary to those of the ordinary sons of men—and they have to force their way through the would as pilgrims through a Vanity Fair where there is nothing for them to purchase and nothing worthy of their attention. May God keep you, dear Brothers and Sisters, a separated people! May you obey that voice, "Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

Observe also, dear Friends, as you read this chapter, what is the blessed hope of the children of God—they are looking for the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ from Heaven! As they look back by faith, they see their Lord upon the Cross and then they see Him in the tomb—and then they behold Him risen from the grave. The last glimpse they catch of Him

is as a cloud receives Him out of their sight. He has gone into Glory, but Believers have not forgotten those angelic words to the disciples, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven." So we expect Him to come. And when He comes, then is to be the time of our highest joy! Even though we are now called the sons of God, "it does not yet appear what we shall be." Our glory, our full bliss, is as yet concealed, "but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." So, Brothers and Sisters, our hope is that when Christ shall come, we shall be perfected—that then we shall be rid of every sin and shall become holy even as He is holy, pure even as He is pure!

What is our occupation while we are waiting for our Lord's return? Standing on the doorstep of the better dispensation, what are we doing? The third verse of this chapter tells us that "every man that has this hope in him purifies himself even as He is pure." Casting off every sin, mourning that it should be within us, resolving that it shall not master us, determining to go from strength to strength in holiness and true righteousness, endeavoring to perfect holiness in the fear of God—this is the present occupation of the sons of God who expect that, by-and-by, they shall be made like unto their risen and ascended Lord!

Now, in order that we may carry on this blessed work of purifying ourselves, I want you to think with me upon three matters suggested by our text. The first is, *the Christian's view of sin*— "Sin is the transgression of the Law." The second is, *the Christian's hope of rescue from sin*. Where does that lie? "You know that He was manifested to take away our sins." And the third is, *the Christian's model*, to which he hopes before long to be conformed—"In Him is no sin" and, as we shall be like He when we shall see Him as He is, so in us there shall be no sin—

"O glorious hope! O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God
And flesh and sin no more control,
The sacred pleasures of my soul."

I. First, then, I want you to consider for a few minutes, for I cannot go fully into such a great subject, what is THE CHRISTIAN'S VIEW OF SIN.

I know that there are some persons who understand, by the word, "sin," some offense against their fellow men, or the outward neglect of religion. They regard sin as if it were the same thing as crime—an offense against the prosperity of the nation or the welfare of their fellow men. I am inclined to think that even some of my Brothers and Sisters in Christ do not really understand what sin is when they say that they live without it. I fancy that *they* mean by sin, something very different from what the Scripture means by that word, otherwise they would hardly talk as they do!

Sin is any lack of conformity to the perfect mind of God, or, according to our text, "sin is the transgression of the Law," and every transgression of the Law is sin. Therefore, we say that, first, *every sin breaks God's Law*. It does not matter what sin is committed, it breaks the Law at some point. There are ten great Commandments of God and it may be that you think you have never broken Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6, but if you have broken Nos. 7, 8, 9, or 10, you have snapped the chain asunder as really as

if you had broken all its links! It little matters to miners in a pit, if the chain is broken, at what particular link it came asunder. So, any offense against the Law of God breaks the whole Law and spoils any hope of the sinner being saved by keeping it. Every sin is an offense against the Law, as you will see if you look at the Law in another aspect. You remember that great Commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself"? Now, if in anything we come short of that Commandment, or if we do anything contrary to it, we have violated the Law. This is what every kind of sin does—either by falling short of the command of God, or going beyond it, the Law is broken. This being the case, is there one among us who has not broken the Law of God?

Then take the other side of this Truth of God. *Every breach of the Law is a sin*. If you do not do what God commands you, fully, heartily, always, without fail—you have sinned. And if you do at any moment that which God commands you *not* to do, you have therein sinned against Him. And let it never be forgotten that what I am now saying about actions applies also to *words*—our Lord told His disciples that for every idle word anyone utters he must give an account in the Day of Judgment. And remember, too, that this rule applies to *thoughts and imaginations and desires*, and to those secret motives which hide away within the soul and never actually come into deeds. God shall bring these hidden things to judgment—and every thought, or word, or deed that is not in perfect conformity with the Law of God and will of God, is a sin. Who among us can stand before the Lord in his own righteousness if this is true? If God shall "lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet," who among us shall not be overwhelmed when "the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies and the waters shall overflow the hiding place?"

Let me further say that *sin is mainly sin became it is a transgression of the Law*. Many a person will say, "I did no harm to anyone." That is not the point—if you break the Law of God, you thereby sin! We must never judge sin merely by its *consequences*, or we may make great mistakes. A points man on the railway does not turn the switch aright and one train crashes into another and a hundred lives are lost. He may say to himself, "What a crime I committed by my carelessness," and everybody denounces him for it. But suppose he forgot to turn the switch and, by a sort of miracle the two trains escaped coming into collision? If by some extraordinary coincidence the two mighty masses of matter rushing onward were stopped in their progress and no hurt came of it, the points man would be just as guilty in that case as in the other! It is not the amount of damage that results from it that makes the sin—*it is the thing itself*. If you are doing wrong, even though you should feed a nation by your wrongdoing, I say that you would still be committing sin! If you get rich by an unholy trick, it is none the less trickery and deception—and there is a curse upon your wealth!

Some sins men can see at once are sins because they bring upon the one who commits them disease of body, or they leave him in rags, or cover him with shame. Then men say, "This course of conduct is wrong,

for look what comes of it." But that is a very imperfect way of looking at the matter—the wrong of a thing consists in this, that it is a breach of God's Law—yet how few ever think of this! To break the Queen's Law is bad, but to break God's Law is far worse! I would like to look every unconverted man in the face and say to him, "I do not accuse you of this or that particular sin, but I lay the axe nearer the root than that and tell you that your great sin is that you do not serve God, you do not give to your Maker the homage which is His due. Your heart never bows itself in obedience to Him, you are a born rebel, you are at enmity against the Most High and you will not yield to Him, your Lord and Sovereign." This is the very essence and virus of the worst possible sin. I know that some will not think much of this view of the matter, but that is because they do not think much of God—and herein is a clear proof of man's enmity against God—in that he does not think it any great evil that he should trifle with the Law of God and live according to his own will and way.

Now let me show you that *it is a great sin to break the Law of God,* for the man who habitually breaks the Law of God is a traitor to his Sovereign—he impugns God's right to reign. He practically says, "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey Him?" As far as he can, he dashes the scepter out of God's hand, takes the crown from His head and makes himself to be his own king and his own lord. Is this, think you, a *little* evil?

Again, the man who prefers sin to holiness practically contradicts God's Word. He says, "It is better not to do God's will. God commands me to do this or that, but I prefer to do the other, judging it to be to my advantage to do so." I say to you, Sinner, that you make out that God is a fool and that you are a wise man! You say, "My course of worldliness, my course of sinful pleasure is the better way, and God does not know what is best for me." Do you think that your Maker will permit you thus, as it were, to give a slap in the face to His Infinite Wisdom?

The breaking of God's Law is also a questioning of His goodness. The man seems to think that God has denied him something which it would be for his gain to have. If he did not think so, he would not desire the forbidden thing. It is the case with all of us as with mother Eve—we come to think that there is some mysterious gain to be gotten by plucking the forbidden fruit—and the dragon whispers, "God knows that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." And so, preferring our own folly to the wisdom and goodness of the great and glorious God, we conclude that He does not wish our highest good and that our highest good is to be found in going contrary to His will! What is this but a direct insult in the face of Infinite Love and saying to God, "You do not love me, after all"?

And, once more, he who dares to break God's Law, seeing that he cannot do it except in the immediate Presence of God, for God is everywhere—he that acts contrary to God's Law before God's own face does, as it were, fling down the gauntlet to his God and defy His power! By such action as that, he either means to declare that God is not almighty, or that Jehovah will not exercise His Omnipotence to defend His honor, or that he, himself, *does not care what God does*, so he will leave Him to do His worst. Every sin has this venom within its bowels—it is a defiance of

the mighty Majesty of God and, O my unpardoned Hearer, this is how you have acted thousands of times, yet the Lord has forborne to strike, and in mercy has borne with you, even to this day!

So, in the first place, that is what the Christian thinks sin to be—it is a breach of the Law of God, and that breach of the Law is full of unnumbered evil, mischief and sins against God.

II. Now, secondly, let us consider what is THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE OF RESCUE FROM SIN. It is revealed in this portion of our text—"We know that He was manifested to take away our sins."

When I have been pondering upon the sin of men—and who among us has not that painful matter continually thrust before us for our consideration?—I have found no comfort except in this glorious fact, that Christ Jesus was manifested to take away our sins! This is the source of the Christian's hope, *God's appearance in human form*! If it is so that the great God Himself deigned to come to earth, and to take upon Him the form of man—if it is so that the ever-blessed Second Person of the Divine Trinity was actually born of a Virgin that He might become Man like ourselves—if it is so that He came here to fight the evil and that He has put His foot down against the advance of the enemy, then I have hope for mankind! I have hope for myself, I have hope that sin may be overcome and, as we know and are sure that God *has come* down among us and has taken upon Himself our nature, since this is the very fundamental Truth of our holy faith, therefore we see how sin can be put away! If You, great God, do undertake to put it away, it can be done! But it can be done by none else. If all the angels in Heaven had promised to cleanse this Augean stable, it would have remained as foul as ever! And if all the sons of men had resolved to purify with fire this foul and loathsome world, it would have still remained a very Gehenna. But if You undertake it, O You blessed Son of God—without whom was not anything made that was made, and by whom all things consist, upholding all things as You do, by the word of Your power—if You undertake the tremendous work, then it will be done!

So, next, our hope lies in *Christ's death*. Our sin needed to be removed in two ways. First, as to the guilt of sin. We have already sinned and, by reason of our sin, we have incurred the righteous anger of God and His just displeasure. God must punish sin. If a man stands in the track of an avalanche, he must be buried beneath it. And if a man stands in the way of the Laws of God, those laws must crush him! There was but one way of deliverance from the guilt of sin and that was for God, Himself, in human form, to take the consequences of human sin upon Himself. Would He ever think of doing such a thing? Could He ever condescend to do it? He has done it! In infinite compassion, He that possessed the royalties of Heaven has doffed His kingly mantle, laid aside His crown and He has come down here to dwell among us in human clay! And being here, He has suffered, He has bled, He has died, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Brothers and Sisters, if He that died on Calvary's Cross was, indeed, the Son of God. If He died there to make an expiation for sin, then I can see how human guilt can be put away. Think of some of the crimes of which it is scarcely lawful for us to speak—how could

such crimson stains ever be washed out except with the blood of the Son of God? Think of your own sins, dear Friend. Even if they have not been so glaring as those of others, yet their turpitude is great. How could they ever be washed away except by the blood of the Son of God? But if You, O Christ, have bowed Your head and given up the ghost—if Your dear body has been laid in the silent tomb, bearing in it the marks of Your anguish—if You have said, "It is finished," who shall contradict You? "It is finished." The great Sacrifice is accomplished and You have, by Your one offering, forever put away the sin of Your people. "We know that He was manifested to take away our sins." Do *you* know it, dear Hearer? If you do not, I am very sorry for you and I pray the Lord to teach you to believe it even now, that you may see your sin put away by Christ's death.

But then, we need *Christ's life in us by the gift of the Spirit.* Even if sin is pardoned, that is not enough for us. We need to have sin put right away from us, from the heart of us and from the life of us. Do you not, my Brothers and Sisters, all agree that this is what you need? I think that if we could be forgiven, and yet not wholly *sanctified*, we could never be happy while sin was still creeping and crawling over us. O you venomous reptile, if you coil yourself around my arm, or about my body anywhere, even if your deadly poison shall be taken from you, yet you do sicken me almost to death by your loathsome touch! How is this foul thing, sin, to be taken away from us? Well, our Lord Jesus Christ was manifested in order that, after His death, when He had ascended up to Heaven, the Holy Spirit might descend and come and dwell in us, to conquer every evil passion and to work in us all manner of holy desires, and so abide in us as to speak out of our mouths, to act through our lives and to make us to live after God's manner of living, and not according to the way of the flesh as once we did! Christ was manifested in order that by His rising again from the dead and going back into Heaven, the Holy Spirit might come and dwell among the believing sons and daughters of men, that He might fashion us into newness of life!

And now, this day, the Christ who trod the soil of this poor earth, the Christ who on it died, the Christ who in it was buried, the Christ who from it ascended into Glory—I say that He, by a mighty, secret and invisible power, is this day working among the guilty children of men, creating them anew, making them new creatures in Christ Jesus! A hoary-headed sinner once said, "I wish I was like that little child, so that I could begin life again." It is this that Jesus does for you, my aged Friend! He makes you to become a babe in Grace. Do you ask, "Can a man be born when he is old?" It is even so, for Christ can make you to be born again and to begin to live quite a new life! For this purpose was He manifested, that He might thus take away our sins and, every day, in those who believe in Him, Christ is crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts! Every day He is making the old man to die. Every day Christ is being formed in us, the hope of Glory. Every day His resurrection-life is giving us the power to rise above the old dead world and its lusts. Every day our ascended Lord is causing us also to ascend, that we may sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Every day He is working in us by His blessed Spirit, that He may make us to be perfectly free from every sin

and so to be like Himself! This, then, is our hope—is it not a blessed one? "We know that He was manifested to take away our sins."

Oh, I wish, my dear Friends, you who have never seriously thought about this matter, that you really would turn your whole attention to it! It is your only hope. But, perhaps, you have got entangled in some vice or, if not that, a cold lethargy of carelessness is upon you, or else you have grown very worldly. There is no getting out of this condition except through one Power—and that Power is in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ! There is but one way to something better, and safer, and more Divine—and that way is Christ. Why do you not seek Him? Surely, you cannot think that it would make you wretched if you became pure and holy! If you imagine such a thing, I bear my willing testimony that, albeit I have tried to serve my Master with all my might, I have never found His service to be a servitude. There is no bondage connected with endeavoring to be like Christ! In fact, there is no joy that always sparkles in the eyes like the joy of a reconciled soul. If sin is pardoned—if evil is conquered—then what is there for me to fear?

Death has no sting for the Believer in Jesus! And life with its burdens cannot overweight us—we are fit to live and we are fit to die if our sin is taken away. Grace has prepared us to suffer, or prepared us for enjoyment. Grace has made us ready for riches, or ready for poverty. Grace makes us ready for the silent chamber of sickness, or for the grave of bereavement, or for the social joy of the little children that clamber about our knee. He is fit for anything who is made like his Lord. If sin is but put away through the manifestation of Christ, it brings nothing that can unfit us for this life or the next, but everything that shall make us fit here and fit hereafter! If I were a secularist, I would wish to be a Christian. If there were no hereafter, yet were it better to have sin forgiven, even as a mortal man, so as to live at peace with the Eternal and to feel a glow of gratitude to Him impelling to self-sacrifice and moving to intense love toward my guilty fellow men. I am sure that it is so! Christianity is the noblest of all ethics, even for the present day, and much more for the eternal world where we are hastening!

III. Now I conclude with just a few brief remarks upon the third point—THE CHRISTIAN'S MODEL TO WHICH HE IS TO BE CONFORMED. You see what his hope is—that the manifestation of Christ will take away his sin. What is his model?

First, it is, *Christ ever perfect.* My lips are unable to fully tell about my perfect Master, Christ Jesus, my Lord, but I may say this, His enemies have looked at Him from every side and they have never yet been able to find a joint in His harness through which to shoot their poisoned darts. Men who have flung aside the great Truth of the Inspiration of the Scriptures and have been prepared, even, to make light of Heaven and Hell, have, nevertheless, gazed with astonishment upon the Character of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is unrivalled among the sons of men—it is absolutely perfect! As one snow-white peak rises above its brother Alps, a crowned monarch, more than peer of all the highest of them, so does the life of Christ rise above that of all philanthropists and all teachers and the loftiest purity that is merely of earth. There is none like He is—there

is no defect in Christ and there is no excess! He is the joy of God's own heart! He is the delight of all the saints above! He is your joy and mine, Beloved—to us He is the Altogether-Lovely.

Mark, next, that *every saint as far as he is in Christ is perfect, too.* That part of me that is still my own, oh, how imperfect it is! That part of me that does not yet abide in Him—that old nature that struggles and sometimes breaks loose—oh, how much I grieve over it! But in so far as Christ comes into contact with us and we yield ourselves to Him, we are affected by His Divine purity so that we become pure even as He is pure! They say, sometimes, of a Christian man who does something that is not right, "He did such-and-such! That is your religion!" No, it is not! That is the point where, as yet, his religion has not thoroughly saturated him. That is *his* defect and *his* failing. Pray God that he may be forgiven for the wrong-doing and ask that the Grace of God may sanctify him wholly—spirit, soul, and body.

With this point I close. This is the resolve, the intent, the prayer, the hope, the assurance of every Believer—that one day he shall be perfectly in Christ—and then he will be perfect as Christ. O blessed, blessed hope! There is not a sin within us but must die. Out with you, Sin, out with you! You must die. There is not a Canaanite in the land, though he is a prince, but must be hanged up before the face of the sun! You know how these iniquities try to hide themselves away within our souls, as the five kings hid in the cave at Makkedah and we have, like Joshua, to roll great stones before the mouth of the cave—some self-denials that cost us a great effort—so as to keep them from coming out! But that is not enough, we cannot be satisfied with having sins hidden away as in a cave—we need to slay them as Joshua slew the five kings.

So, before the sun goes down, we cry, "Come out with you! Come out with you! You must die, every one of you." There is not to be any wrong thought, or wrong desire, or wrong action spared! We must put all to death if we would become as perfect and pure as Christ is. "That is a hard lesson," you say. "It is a blessed hope," I say. "It is very difficult," you say. I confess that it is impossible to us, but it is not impossible to Him who undertakes it for us! He was manifested to take away our sins and since the manifestation included the Incarnation, the bloody sweat and the death upon the Cross, what is there that it cannot accomplish? Believe, dear Friend, that every sin in you will yet be slain and that you shall stand before God, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." "This would be my Heaven," you say. Indeed, you cannot have a better Heaven than that! Washed completely from all defilement, delivered from every trace of past sin and from every tendency to future sin, perfectly in Christ Jesus and perfect in Christ Jesus—oh, this is Heaven, indeed! Believing this, let us struggle and fight to attain it, and let us never rest satisfied till we get it!

"Then," says one, "we shall never rest satisfied this side of Heaven." Of course you will not! As long as you are here, you will have to fight. As long as you are here, you will have to strive and struggle. If you have already gained the victory to a large degree, go on and get more and more of it. Sometime ago I heard a man ask, "Can we be perfect in this life?" I

smelt that he had been drinking, and I thought to myself, "Well now, you are something like a man who is covered with rags, and has not a penny in his pocket, who asks, "Do you think it is possible that every working man can be a millionaire?" Had he not better ask, first, whether *he could save five shillings*? So, when a man says, "Can I be perfect?" I say, "My dear Fellow, you need not bother your head about that matter at present. You are such a long way from it yet that you had better find out how you can even become moral, first. There are some overt sins that you can get rid of, and ought to get rid of, but there is a long, long way between a soul that has just begun to perceive the guilt of sin and to break off outward evil habits and vices—and that same soul being absolutely perfect like unto God Himself. There is so great a distance that you must have God to carry you across it, or you will never traverse it! And you must cast yourself as a sinner at the feet of Jesus, or you may never hope for it.

Come, let all of us begin at the Cross this very moment! Let us begin by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then He will purify us even as He is pure and, at the last, when He shall appear, we shall be like He is, for we shall see Him as He is. God bless you all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 JOHN 3.

Verse 1. *Behold*—For there is no greater wonder out of Heaven than this—"Behold."

1. *What manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not.* As we are called the sons of God, we are to be made like His only-begotten Son. And here is the beginning of the likeness, that, as the world did not know Him and, therefore, crucified Him, so it does not know the other sons of God and, therefore, spends its malice upon them whenever it can! Yet what a marvelous thing is this—what a wonder of Divine condescension—that we who were the slaves of Satan, the children of disobedience, the heirs of wrath, should be called the sons of God! We can well accept the consequence of such a position without any very great sorrow—"Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not."

2. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God.*—Not merely in Heaven, or when we come to die, but *now*, in this place, in our pain, in our sorrow, yes, notwithstanding our imperfections and infirmities, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

2. *And it does not yet appear what we shall be.* We are made like unto Christ, but when He was here, it did not then appear what He should be. If you had seen the lowly Nazarene who was "despised and rejected of men," could you have guessed what He will be in His glory when it shall please God to judge the world by Jesus Christ? So, in like manner, "it does not yet appear what we shall be."

2. *But we know that when He shall appear, we shall He like He; for we shall see Him as He is.* Every spiritual sight of Him is transforming. Our

looking at Him, here, makes us what we are. Our looking at Him at the last shall make us like what He is. Oh, what joy to know that the medicine for our souls is taken in at the eyes of *faith* and by the sight of Christ we are healed!

3. *And every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure.* The great object of the Christian's hope is perfect purification. If we expect to be like Christ, we look for it in the putting away of sin and in the girding on of all manner of excellence, holiness and loveliness, for therein will lie our likeness to Christ. Oh, that God would give us more and more of this Christ-likeness!

4, 5. *Whoever commits sin transgresses also the Law: for sin is the transgression of the Law. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins.* Not to let us live in them at ease, not to make sin become a pardonable matter, so that we might indulge in it and yet hope to escape from its consequences. Oh, no! "He was manifested to take away our sins."

5. *And in Him is no sin.* Whatever He does, it does not contribute to sin, but is the deadly antagonist of sin.

6. *Whoever abides in Him sins not: whoever sins has not seen Him, neither known Him.* The man who dwells in Christ is the holy man, but the man who lives in sin is no child of God, for he proves by his evil conduct that he has no vital union with Christ. The fruit of Christianity is holiness and if your life is a sinful one—if that is the main run and tenor of your life—you are none of His.

7. *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.* He is practically righteous, he is truly righteous. But let no man talk about being righteous before God while he is willfully indulging in sin. This cannot be! You must be divorced from sin, or you cannot be married to Christ. The Gospel demands and also *creates* holiness of character. And wherever it works effectively upon the heart and conscience, it produces purity in the life.

8. *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.* He did not come to make us easy while under the devil's sway, but to fetch us out from the tyrant's dominion and lead us to live a godly, sober, righteous, pure life unto His praise and glory.

9. *Whoever is born of God does not commit sin.* That is to say, he does not *live* in it, it is not the tenor of his life. He is not outwardly so that others could convict him of it, or inwardly so that his own conscience could chide him with it, a man who loves sin.

9. *For His seed remains in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God.* Immortal principles forbid the child of God to sin. The new-born life within us keeps us holy. We have our imperfections and infirmities over which we mourn, but no child of God can live in sin and love it. He hates it! He is like a sheep that may fall into the mire, but he will not wallow in it, as the swine do. As soon as possible, he is up again out of the mud and the filth. He goes sorrowing, with broken bones, when he perceives that he has grieved his God. His life as a whole is a holy life.

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.* An unlovely spirit is also self-condemnatory as being an unholy spirit. In fact, lack of love is lack of righteousness. There are some who profess to be so righteous that they condemn everybody else and they have no heart of compassion for those who are suffering in consequence of their faults. But oh, Beloved, it is one thing to hate sin and it is another thing to hate the sinner! Let your indignation burn against everything that is evil, but still, towards him who has done the wrong always have the gentle thought of pity and for him present the prayer that he may leave his sin and turn unto his gracious God. It may be difficult to reach this point, but there should always be just that happy mixture in the mind and heart of the child of God—love to the sinner and hatred of his sin.

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.* And there is no hate like that—the hate of a bad man towards a good one—not for doing him any wrong, but simply for rebuking him by the silent eloquence of his holy life. Men who love sin cannot endure the sight of virtue and if they cannot kill the good man, they will try to kill his reputation. They sneer and say, "Ah, he is as bad as others, no doubt, if you could only find him out!" That is exactly the spirit of Cain, "who was of that Wicked One and slew his brother."

13-17. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, 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 goods and sees his brother has need, and shuts up his heart of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?* Perhaps he will do it on what he calls, "principle." He thinks it is wrong to help his needy brother, so he says. But however he may put it, the Holy Spirit asks this searching question, "Whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother has need, and shuts up his heart of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?"

18, 19. *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.* Full assurance comes very much this way, by a practical carrying out of the Law of love.

20. *For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.* Which we do not and, therefore, our condemnation can never be so heavy as the condemnation which God will bring upon us. Let the man whose own conscience accuses him, question himself as to how he will stand in the Presence of the all-seeing God.

21. *Beloved, if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God.* If we can feel in our own bosoms that, by Divine Grace, we

have been led to be honest, upright and true before the Lord, "then have we confidence toward God."

22. *And whatever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His Commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.* Notice those conditions of answered prayer. We cannot expect God to grant us our wishes if we do not conform to His will. Holiness has a great deal to do with power in prayer. It is not every man who prays who shall have whatever he asks for, but it is put so here, and it is notable that it is so put, "Whatever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His Commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." This is not mere legality—this is not a matter of work-mongering. When we become God's children, He treats us as a father treats his child. You know what you do with a boy who is disobedient. He asks you for something that he wants and you say, "No, I cannot grant you that. Your conduct is such that I cannot let you have the pleasures that otherwise I would be pleased to give you." But you have another boy who is very careful in all things to do his father's will—and you have marked the anxiety of his heart to be obedient to you, and you say, "Yes, my dear Child, you may have whatever you want. I know that you would not have asked for it if you had not thought that it would be agreeable to my mind. And as you have asked that which is suitable for me to give, you may have it, and I am glad to give it to you." So is it in the fatherly discipline of the house of God—if we do those things which are pleasing in His sight, we shall have power to prevail with Him in prayer.

23, 24. *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. And he that keeps his Commandments dwells in Him, and He in him.* That is a great mystery, for us to dwell in God, and for God to dwell in us! It is even so, but only he who knows it can understand it. Experience, alone, can explain our dwelling in God and God dwelling in us.

24. *And hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us.* Holy Spirit, dwell in me and teach me the meaning of this precious Word, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—257, 561, 506.

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

APART
NO. 2510

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 28, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart."
Zechariah 12:12-14.

True repentance is always accompanied by sorrow. It has been said by some of those of modern times who disparage repentance that repentance is "nothing but a change of mind." These words sound as if there was merely some superficial meaning to them and so, indeed, they are intended by those who use them, but they are not so intended by the Spirit of God! Repentance may be and is a change of mind, but what a change it is! It is not an unimportant change of mind such as you may have concerning whether you will take your holiday this week or the next, or about some trifling matter of domestic interest—it is a change of the whole heart, of the love, of the hate, of the judgment and the view of things taken by the individual whose mind is thus changed. It is a deep, radical, fundamental, lasting change. And you will find that whenever you meet with it in Scripture, it is always accompanied with sorrow for past sin. And rest you assured of this fact, that the repentance which has no tears in its eyes and no mourning for sin in its heart is a repentance which needs to be repented of, for there is no *evidence* of conversion, no sign of the existence of the Grace of God! In what way has that man changed his mind who is not sorry that he has sinned? In what sense can it be said that he has undergone any change worth experiencing if he can look back upon his past life with pleasure, or look upon the prospect of returning to his sin without an inward loathing and disgust?

I say again that we have need to stand in doubt of that repentance which is not accompanied with mourning for sin! And even when Christ is clearly seen by faith and sin is pardoned—and the man knows that it is forgiven—he does not cease to mourn for sin. No, Brothers and Sisters, his mourning becomes deeper as his knowledge of his guilt becomes greater. And his hatred of sin grows in proportion as he understands that love of Christ by which his sin is put away. In true Believers, mourning for sin is chastened and sweetened and, in one sense, the fang of bitterness is taken out, but, in another sense, the more we realize our indebtedness to God's Grace, and the more we see of the sufferings of Christ in order to our redemption, the more do we hate sin and the more do we

lament that we ever fell into it. I am sure it is so, and that every Christian's experience will confirm what I say.

In the case of these people mentioned by the Prophet Zechariah, one of the prominent points about their repentance was that all in the land were to mourn. They were to look upon Christ whom their sins had put to death and they were to mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son and to be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In fact, the lamentation which was to accompany this repentance is said to be as great as the mourning of the whole nation when Josiah fell in the battle with Pharaoh-Nechoh at Megiddo—"In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon."

Another special characteristic of this mourning described by Zechariah, which also distinguishes genuine repentance for sin, is that it is *personal*, the act of each *individual*, and the act of the individual *apart* from any of his fellows. The watchword of true penitence is this word, "*apart*." How it rings out in the text, "Every family *apart*; the family of the house of David *apart*, and their wives *apart*; the family of the house of Nathan *apart*, and their wives *apart*; the family of the house of Levi *apart*, and their wives *apart*; the family of Shimei *apart*, and their wives *apart*; all the families that remain, every family *apart*, and their wives *apart*."

Sham repentance can do its work in the mass—it talks about national sin and national sorrow which generally means the mere notion of sin and the notion of repentance. But when it comes to a true work of the Spirit of God and men do really mourn for sin so as to obtain pardon, it is a thing in which *each individual stands in a personal solitude*, as much apart from everybody else as if he had been the only man that God ever made and was without father and without mother and without descent and had, himself, alone, so sinned that the whole anger of God for sin had fallen upon him! A man in this condition gets alone, he bears his sin apart, quitting the company of his fellows and all the charms that once lured him to destruction. And his lamentation on account of sin is his own sole act and deed. It wells up from his own heart. It is not borrowed from others, but, by the effectual working of the Grace of God, everything about it is of himself.

I. It is to this important matter that I now call your attention. And in doing so our first point will be THE INDIVIDUALIZING EFFECT OF SORROW FOR SIN.

Let me remind you, first, that this *individualizing is seen even when the mourning is universal*. Read the text again. "The land shall mourn, every family apart." If there should ever come such a blessed visitation of Grace to England that all men should repent of sin and mourn over it, yet *each man* would repent of sin and mourn over it as much as if he were the only penitent in the entire country! This point is worth noticing because there are some who fancy that if there should come a great revival, they would get converted. Perhaps some of you think that in such a case you would get into the swim and be carried onward by it, as people are sometimes borne along in a great crowd. Let me tell you that if you were thus swept along by the stream and had not exercised *individual repentance* of sin and *personal faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ, it would be

of no value to you! It would be a false religion that you would receive in that way, and it is better for you to remember and know for sure that you cannot enter the strait and narrow gate in a crowd, borne in by others, but you must come in separately and distinctly yourself!

Why should not that be the case with you even now? When there shall be times of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord, the brightest days that ever shone in Christendom, yet, even then, every true conversion must be an *individual* one. All true faith that shall ever come to you must be a looking with your own eyes and, all drawing near to God in repentance must be the act of your own spirit, under the drawings of the Holy Spirit. Whatever is done by others, even by multitudes of genuine converts, will be of no use to you. If it is to bring blessing to you, it must be the work of the Spirit of God upon you *individually*.

Do notice that foundation fact and let none of us ever forget it, but let this day of mourning for sin, throughout the whole Church of God, be as much a time of mourning for sin for me and for you as if you and I were the only persons in the world who were aware of that sin, or who had felt at all the evil and the wickedness of it! Otherwise we shall lose all true repentance in the idea of a national repentance. We shall lose all sense of sin in the notion that everybody has a sense of sin, that everybody is humbled in penitence before God and that everybody is seeking the Lord.

Notice, next, that while this apartness is seen when holy mourning becomes universal, *it also is manifest when there are some few households humbling themselves before God*. Even then, when there are only a few repenting households, the separation of one family from another will be seen. The whole of the penitents are separate from the ungodly around them! They are distinguished as those who are mourning before God, yet even then, each individual family will be separated, the one from the other. If it should come to pass that the families of this Church should begin unitedly to mourn by reason of the great sin of the times—and I heartily hope that it may be the case—yet even then, if it is true sorrow for sin, there will be a distinctness between one family and another family. There will be a sort of idiosyncrasy around the mourning for sin in this house, or in that house, which will distinguish the mourners there from all others. You can manufacture man-made things by the gross, but God's creations are made one by one. He puts His seal of variety upon all that He creates.

Painters can make *replicas* of their great works and you may see here, and there, copies of paintings that are, stroke for stroke, the same, but God does not repeat Himself! There is a distinctness about the face of every man and every woman—you may mistake one man for another—but it is from casual observation, or from partial knowledge. But a man's own wife does not make a mistake about who is her husband! His child knows which is his father and does not mistake another man for him. So, whatever resemblance there may be, there is a difference which is readily discernible—and if it is so in the natural face of a man, much more is it so in *spiritual* features. One man differs from another and one family differs from another and, consequently, in the mourning, even when it becomes general throughout all the families of Christ, yet each

family still keeps itself somewhat apart from the rest and differs from every other.

This individualizing is further seen *in the distinction between family and family when both fear the Lord*. In our text we have quite a little list of families given in order to make this Truth of God clear. Each family has its peculiar sin and a specialty must be made in confessing it. There is, first, the family of the house of David, that is, the royal household. And the house of David was, as kings went in those days, a superior household. Kings' households have not often been of much account, but David's, though it was a long way from being perfect, was better than the best of the ungodly royal houses in those days. Yet there was something for the house of David and all the kings of the house of David to mourn over, for the sins of royalty are royal sins, and those are sins, indeed, which come from those who wear crowns and are leaders among the sons of men. Therefore the family of the house of David must mourn apart.

Next, we are told that the family of the house of Nathan shall mourn apart. Take that to be the family of a Prophet—the family down at the Manse, if you like. There is some particular sin in the minister's household which makes it proper that his family should mourn apart. Or, it may refer to the family of that good man in the Church who is distinguished for his walk with God. Yet, even in *his* family there is a something which, when God the Holy Spirit visits it as a Spirit of intercession and of mourning for sin, will cause it to mourn apart.

There will be something about each household which it does not like to tell others. And even in the house of Levi, which is so near to that of Nathan—for the Prophet and the priest often go hand in hand—yet, when their families are gathered together to confess sin, Nathan prefers that the family of Levi should not be at his house and Levi is anxious that there should be a closed door when he and his household are mourning before the Lord. You will be right if you let the family of Levi represent the household of a gracious people, for now that the priesthood is the common property of all the elect of God, I do not care to distinguish Levi otherwise than as a believing man in whose house there is a Church of God and all whose family are of priestly rank. Still, even there, among the holiest and best of saints, among those devoted to the service of God, among those whose very lives are spent in work for God, there will be some sin that shall make the house of Levi wish to mourn apart from all others.

Then there was to be the mourning of the family of Shimei. We do not know who this Shimei may have been. Some commonplace person, perhaps. Possibly his was a household in which there had not been the fear of God. But when the Grace of God comes to it, then the house of Shimei begins to mourn apart for its own special sin. You see, dear Friends, that the one blow I have kept striking upon the anvil is this, "apart, apart, APART!" All this mourning, however similar it might be in the one case to the other, is presented to God separately by each family—and if ever families were marked off, the one from the other, by a most manifest line of demarcation, it was in the night of weeping when, as at Bochim, they drew near unto God in prayer apart.

Notice, next, that this separateness is carried very far by the fact that, in each case, *it put the family apart and their wives apart*. These people were one flesh, but when their hearts were made flesh, they had to offer separate supplications. The common sin of husbands and wives should be confessed unitedly, and there is nothing more natural, more beautiful, and more edifying than for husbands and wives to pray together, to confess sin together, and to offer thanksgiving together. In all these they may be most fittingly one. Yet there is and there must be some sin which the man shall bring before God and before God, alone, feeling that even his dearest one would be an intruder in that act of personal mourning for sin. And when the Spirit of God is in the woman's heart, she feels that, though she has no earthly secret from her husband, yet there is something between God and her soul into which even her husband cannot enter. Her mourning for her sin, when she first seeks the Savior, would be hindered by her husband's interposition, so she gets alone. And his mourning for sin, when he first seeks the Savior, or when afterwards he is conscious of some backsliding and longs to return to his Lord, must be apart and alone.

No, you dearest ones, when we enter into the closet and shut the door, you must enter your closet and shut the door, for, in the dealing of a soul with God, it must be One and one, the one Mediator standing between them two, but no other individual interposing. This family or that family was to mourn apart as a family, but then the individuals composing each family were also to be separate in their confession before the Most High—"every family apart, and their wives apart."

II. Now, secondly, HOW DOES THE INDIVIDUALITY GENERALLY SHOW ITSELF?

Well, in many ways. So truly is mourning for sin a personal thing, that each individual sees most his own sin and feels himself to be alone as to *character*. That man who has truly repented of sin believes that under some aspects, he is the greatest of all sinners. He is not so absurd as to charge himself with certain sins which he never committed, which probably he never had the opportunity to commit—but he is wise enough to see that our guiltiness before God not only depends upon the act committed, but upon the will to commit it and upon the spirit—and very much upon the Light of God against which a man has sinned, and upon the peculiar circumstances of favor and mercy which the man, himself, may have forgotten, but which prove him to have been most ungrateful in the commission of sin. I do not know about your sin, dear Brother—you may be worse than I am, but I do know my own sin so far as to feel that I hope you are not worse than I am—and to believe that I myself must take no other place than among the guiltiest and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Hence, each man's confession is necessary apart, because there is a different character in it.

Generally, mourning for sin is separate as to *place*. When a man is under a sense of sin, he likes to get alone. I knew one who, in his soul-trouble, resorted to a saw-pit. Many have hidden behind a haystack, some have gone into the barn. Into all manner of strange nooks and corners we go when we are mourning for sin, but solitude has wonderful charms to a bleeding heart. You feel above all things that even if it is the

open street, you must get into some sort of solitude—if necessary, even the awful solitude of being lost in a crowd! Thus, man recognizes the individuality of his sin by wishing to get apart even as to place.

And I am sure that it is so as to *time*. True mourning for sin is not a matter of hours and days. You cannot say, "Now it is time for me to mourn over my sin and I must keep on so many minutes, and then have done." Ah, no, dear Friends! When a man is ill, when he is consumptive, or has a bad cough, if he comes to Chapel, you think to yourself that you would like him to cough during the pauses in the service and not at other times. But, poor Soul, he cannot help himself—he must cough when he must cough. And when a man has a groan in his soul, he cannot groan according to the position of the sun! He cannot take down a book of prayers and say, "Now is the time for the confession of sin. And now is the time for this, and now is the time for that." He cannot follow the rules that may have been best in somebody else's case. All the time some are praising God, he will still be mourning, and when others are lamenting with broken hearts, he is smiting his heart to think that it will not lament and will not break! The things of eternal life cannot be set according to carnal time—they will come according to their own way and thus, every man and every woman must mourn for sin apart—and there is no regulating them by the movements of the clock.

Not only are they separate as to place and time, but they get apart as to *manner*. Some can weep over their sin, but others could not shed a tear if they were offered the world for it. Some are silent in their agony. Others cry aloud. One man feels that his heart is broken—another envies him and wishes that his hard heart would break. One person is full of misery on account of sin. Another says—

"If aught is felt, 'tis only pain,
To find I cannot feel."

There is a separate form of mourning about each true penitent and let no one say of himself, "I have not mourned for sin because I have not mourned as somebody else has done." Perhaps if you had been exactly like somebody else, there might be a suspicion that you were a mere copyist and not an original work of the Grace of God! So, true mourning differs in its manner.

Do you not also know, dear Friends, that each person who mourns for sin has his own *secret*—a secret which he must not tell to anyone but the Lord? It were a pity that he should tell it to human ears. There is a something in each individual case into which a stranger cannot enter. You may have read John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* and you may have noticed that most of his biographers say that Bunyan's account of himself was generally blackened by a morbid consciousness—which also shows how little they know about the matter, for the man who has led the purest life when he is brought before God by the humbling influence of the Holy Spirit, is the man who almost invariably considers himself to have been viler than anybody else! It is possible that John Bunyan was not worse than any other gipsy tinker. He may have been a great deal better, that is to say, in the judgment of the blind bats that try to see what he was like, but he knew himself better than they knew him, for he had seen himself in the strong light of the Holy Spirit! God had turned the

bull's-eye of the great lantern of the Law full into the man's face and so he had a better idea of his own character than you and I have. And what he did tell us is not all he knew—he would not have dared to tell it all—it would have been wrong that he should.

As there are words in Heaven so high that it were not lawful for a man to utter them, so are there words down here in the deep corruption of our fallen spirits that it were not lawful for a man to utter save in the ear of the Most High! Therefore, each individual must mourn apart.

III. Our time is running so fast that I must go on to notice, thirdly, HOW WE ACCOUNT FOR THIS INDIVIDUALITY. Why is it that each man thus mourns apart?

Well, in part, it is to be accounted for by *that natural and justifiable shame which prevents our confessing all our sins before others*. I take it to be an awful violation of the natural delicacy of the human mind when any person is invited to make oral confession to a priest. I can myself scarcely conceive of anything that could be more degrading to the heart and more injurious to the conscience than the infernal brazenness of heart that permits anybody to attempt such a thing! As the inspired Prophet would have said, they must have "a whore's forehead" before they can dare to unmask their hearts before their fellow men. No, no, Brothers and Sisters, such a thing must not be so much as *named* among us! What shame remains in us ought to prevent such a shameful or shameless thing as that. Hence, our mourning must be apart.

Secondly, in such a case, *the heart desires to go to God, Himself, and the presence of anybody else seems like an intrusion between our soul and our God*. The man looks around the room. He is afraid that somebody may come in and disturb his devotion, so he turns the key in the door. "Now," he says, "my God, it is to You that I would speak. I should not like a dog to hear what I have to say to You, now that I come and honestly and openly lay bare my heart for Your inspection, hating the very garment spotted by the flesh, and desiring to be washed thoroughly from my iniquities."

Further, *the man is conscious that his guilt has been all his own*. He dissociates himself, when he truly repents, from everybody else. He does not think of laying the blame on those who tempted him, or on ungodly parents who neglected his education. He looks for nobody to be his scapegoat except the appointed Scapegoat. He says, "I have sinned and done this evil in Your sight, O my God, and I stand before You, alone, to confess it." And therefore he gets the pardon of his guilt. This, indeed, is a sure sign of sincerity. If you can only pray in public, you do not pray at all! If you can only join in the general confession, you have uttered a public lie! You are only right before God when it is your *own* sin, felt in your *own* heart, confessed by *yourself* before your *own* God, unknown to anybody else and altogether known to Him.

Dear Hearers, have you all done this? Have you all repented of sin? I am glad that so many are willing to spend a week-night in listening to the Gospel and I always have hope that there is some religious sense about you that leads you to this mid-week service. But still, permit this personal question—Has religion been only a family matter to you? Are you what you are because your mother was so or your father was so? Are

you of this religion or that because it is the national faith—because your pedigree has brought down with it your creed? This will not do! Remember, you have to be born alone, you will have to *die* alone, you will have to be *judged* alone and you must be *born again* alone! And therefore there must be for yourself a *personal* sense of sin, a *personal* seeking to Christ, a *personal* acceptance of pardon through the precious blood. Is it so with you all?

Our days are running swiftly away—we are all getting older and coming nearer to the end of life. If you have never confessed sin, I entreat you to do it now. If you have never been delivered from its terrible curse, seek to be delivered now! Before you close your eyes in what may be the last sleep you shall ever know, confess your sin and trust in Jesus! O God, help us each one separately thus to come to You! It is with this plea that I close my discourse—let us make personal, complete, and searching investigations into our own case before God. Let us go before Him with our own personal acknowledgments, with nothing borrowed from others. Let us not make a masquerade of religion, but let us go before God as we are, confess our sinful state and seek pardon for the sake of Him who died, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

And then, dear Friend, if you have really made this confession and have found peace with God, then go forth and try to bring others. Having lighted your own torch, let it not burn in your private chamber, only, but go through the streets with it—go into the darkest places and let that light flame forth! But take care that it is not dimmed by any repetition of the sin you acknowledge. It is no use pretending to mourn for sin and then to keep on in it—

"Repentance is to leave
The sin we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve
By doing so no more."

May true holiness spring out of your repentance and may this go side by side with an earnest endeavor, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to bring others to repent apart as we have done, through Him whose Cross is the sole hope of sinners, who Himself, living and pleading for sinners at the Father's right hand, is the one lone Star that makes glad the midnight of our guilt. Oh, look you away from self to Christ! If your confession of sin is offered without thought of Him, away with your confession of sin! Repentance is nothing apart from Christ. Look to Him through your tears, through your depression of spirit and say, "Just as I am, I cast myself at those dear feet that bled out life for me, and look up to the torn side which is the one cleft of the rock where the sinner may hide himself away from the tempests of eternal wrath."

God bless you, Beloved! May we meet in Heaven to sing together, though on earth we must mourn apart, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 51.

Although we may have been preserved by Divine Grace from any gross and open sin, yet let us read this Psalm in the spirit of penitence. I al-

ways feel afraid of myself if I cannot read this Psalm from my heart. Surely some pride must have entrusted my spirit and taken away its humility and its tenderness, if I cannot join in David's penitential prayer. I think that all of us who have the Spirit of God within us will feel that these words are suited to us as well as to poor broken-hearted David.

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God.* "I cannot do without mercy, though I am Your child and You must give me great mercy, or it will be no mercy to me, for little mercy will not serve my turn. ' Have mercy upon me, O *God,'* without stint and without end."

1. *According to Your loving kindness.* "If I must set You a measure, let Your own Nature be the measure of Your mercy. I would view You in the most tender, brightest light—according to Your kindness—yes, Your loving kindness." Surely that is one of the sweetest words in our dear mother tongue, and no other language contains a sweeter one—"*according* to Your loving kindness."

1. *According unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* "You cannot blot out such multitudes of sins unless You have multitudes of mercies, but inasmuch as there is no counting of Your mercies any more than there is counting of my sins, let the bright drops of Your mercy be equal to the black drops of my transgression. When I view my sin in its blackness, then I cry for mercy according to Your loving kindness. And when I view my transgressions in their multitude, then I cry for pardon 'according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies.'" Is not this a blessed prayer? It could not have come from David if he had not felt the greatness of his sin—and it will not suit you, dear Friends, unless you, also, are taught by the Spirit of God to know what a bitter thing sin is.

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.* What a washing that is! The penitent desires to have it done thoroughly—"Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity." "Leave not a single spot, for one speck would be sufficient to shut me out of Heaven. I must be spotless to be admitted there. 'Wash me thoroughly.' Wash not only this outward stain, but this inward defilement. Wash me through and through—'thoroughly'—till there is no trace of my sin. So wash me till I am cleansed and made perfectly clean." There is none but the Lord, Himself, who can wash us after this fashion. Each of us may say with Job, "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands ever so clean; yet shall You plunge me in the ditch and my own clothes shall abhor me." If we made the sea to be our bath, we should sooner crimson every wave with our iniquities than one single stain of guilt should be washed away by the waters of old Ocean. It is a Divine work to cleanse from sin—therefore say, dear Friend, "Lord, You must wash me if I am to be washed; but do it thoroughly. 'Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.'"

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.* It is a great mercy when it is so with us, for when our sins are before our face, God will put them behind His back. When we do not see our sin, then God sees it, but when we see it aright, then God will not see it, for He will put it away forever. As for you who think yourselves innocent, by that very fact you are proved to be naked, poor, blind and miserable! But

You who are, in a spiritual sense, poverty-stricken, you who confess your guilt, shall find pardon, for the plea of, "Guilty, my Lord," is that which God answers by a sentence of acquittal.

4. *Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.* David's great iniquity was a sin against many, but he had been brought to learn what few see—that the virus of sin lies in its being against God. Last Sabbath evening, our subject (*Sermon #2509, Volume 43—"The Sinful made Sinless"*—read/download the entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org) was that *"sin* is the transgression of the Law" and I tried to show that the very essence of its sinfulness lies in the fact that it is rebellion against the will of God. So, David here puts his finger on the great black blot and shows that he knew where the chief mischief lay—"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." Let God do what He will with us, He cannot treat us worse than we deserve. If we were banished from His Presence into a hopeless eternity, we should not dare to complain. He is justified when He speaks! He is clear when He judges!

5. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* "I am bad from the fountainhead of my being, and wrong all through. It is not only what I do that is wrong, but I, myself, am wrong. I am a double-dyed traitor, and born of a traitoress." I doubt not that David's mother was as good as any mother. Probably she was a true child of God, but, for all that, David and all of us have the old tendency to sin from the very fact of our descent from fallen parents. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one."

6. *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom.* Ah, Friends, that is the troublesome part of the matter! We might be able to rectify the external wrong and to reform our outward actions, but who can make his *heart* clean? You can prune the tree, you may cut it to almost any shape you like, but you cannot make the deadly tree bring forth healthy fruit. You cannot change the sap, or alter the nature of the tree's roots. What but a Divine Power can do this? "In the hidden part *You* shall make me to know wisdom." But nobody else can.

7. *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* I think that this is grand faith for a man, blinded by his tears, broken-hearted through his sin, to feel that God can make him clean. "Take You the hyssop, as I have seen my father do on the Passover night, when the lamb was slain, and the blood of it caught in the basin. Have I not seen him dip the hyssop in the blood and then sprinkle it on the lintel and the side posts of the door? Have I not seen the priest dip his bunch of hyssop into the sacrificial blood and then sprinkle all the people and so make them ceremonially clean? Lord, You have a better hyssop dipped in better blood! 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.'" Possibly you know, dear Friends, that the verse may be read in the future tense—You *shall purge me with hyssop,* and I shall be clean. *You shall wash me,* and I shall be whiter than snow." This is grand faith! I do not know that the

faith of Abraham, as a saint, when he offered up his son, was greater than the faith of David, as a sinner, when he believed that God could make even him whiter than snow!

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.* Beloved, it is a sweet thing when we come to close dealings with God like this. David needs cleansing, but he will not have it except from God. He needs peace and comfort, but he will look only to God for them—"Make me to hear joy and gladness." If you go out into the streets when you are sad, you may hear sounds of joy and gladness which will seem like a mockery of your sorrow. "As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart." But when God speaks in mercy. When He opens our ears to hear His melodious accents of pardon, then the very bones which have been broken begin to rejoice! Probably there is no more refined pleasure of a human kind than that which comes to a man who is getting convalescent, one who is gradually being restored after a very severe illness. So there is certainly nothing more sweet than that calm quiet happiness which comes of pardoned sin when the broken heart begins to be healed—"Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice."

9. *Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.* It is not, "Let the evil be hushed up, let not my people hear about it," but, "Hide *Your* face from my sins." It is not, "Help me to forget that I have been a criminal." No, but, "Hide *Your* face from my sins." "And, Lord, when You are blotting out my iniquities, blot them all out—those that have never come to such a public head as this great sin with Bathsheba. Lord, when You begin blotting out my sins, make a clean sweep of them all. Draw Your pen right down the page of my guilt—strike out every item that ever has been recorded there! 'Blot out all my iniquities.'"

10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* Do you notice how David blends justification with sanctification? His prayer for pardon is always accompanied by a prayer for purity! He does not want to have his sin blotted out and then to continue sinful—he cries "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." "I have marred it, so come, Lord, and renew it. Your handwriting on my conscience has grown dim. Come and write upon me in bolder characters which can never be erased."

11. *Cast me not away from Your Presence; and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.* Are you praying these prayers, dear Friends, as we are reading them? I am sure you are if you have ever enjoyed the Presence of God, if the Holy Spirit is your daily companion. And if you have lost that heavenly Company, if you have lost that comfortable Presence, I know that you are crying to get it back—and it will come back at your cry.

12. *Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free spirit.* "Make me happy, O Lord, but oh, make me steadfast! In delivering me from my sin, deliver me from ever going into it again! Make me like a burnt child that stays clear of the fire. O my God, come back to me!"

13. *Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.* Dear Friends, there is nothing that helps us to preach so well as a sense that we are sinners and that God has had

mercy upon us! Come up fresh from the washing, dripping with the blood of cleansing, and every drop will seem to plead with sinners that they, too, would come and be washed! Live near to the Cross and there is no fear about your preaching so that sinners shall be converted unto God. Sometimes we seem to get into a kind of spiritual rose water—we appear to be so very superfine, that we have to condescend to poor sinners and preach down to them from our supreme heights! And they never get a blessing that way—but when, by deep experience, we are put upon their level and feel that, as Christ has saved us, so He can save them, then do we speak with power and unction!

14, 15. *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.* David is going to preach and to sing, too! And he will do it all himself—just now he needs nobody to help him. He is so given up to the service of his Master that he will be preacher and praise leader, too. He will say, and he will sing, that God is a righteous God. That was an amazing theme for a blood-washed sinner—"My tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness." But, believe me, nobody understands the righteousness of God but the man who understands sin—and who also understands the wondrous mercy by which it is put away through the bleeding Sacrifice of Christ! When we have reached that point, then can we and then *will* we show forth His righteousness!

16, 17. *For You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it: You delight not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.* Bring these sacrifices, dearly Beloved, bring them to God now! Bring your broken spirit, bring your troubled conscience, bring your bleeding heart, bring all your trembling on account of sin! Bring it all to God's altar *now*.

17-19. *A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.* There must be great sacrifices of joy when great sin is put away by a great ransom—"Then shall they offer bullocks"—not lambs, but bullocks—"upon Your altar." God help each of us henceforth to offer bullocks upon His altar, not the poor little things such as we have previously brought, but some *great* consecrated offering let us bring unto the God who has forgiven all our transgressions and blotted out all our iniquities!

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

BROUGHT OUT TO BE BROUGHT IN
NO. 2511

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 4, 1897.
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"He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore unto our fathers."
Deuteronomy 6:23.

OUR text occurs in the passage where the Israelites are told to personally instruct their children concerning the testimonies and statutes and judgments of the Lord. When they asked the meaning of the various ordinances of God's House, their *parents were to tell them—not to refer them to the priest*—they were, themselves, to instruct their children in the things of God. In our own case, however much we may love and appreciate the Sunday school system—and we cannot love it too much—I hope we shall never forget that the first duty towards the child belongs to the parent. Fathers and mothers are the most natural agents for God to use in the salvation of their children. I am sure that, in my early youth, no teaching ever had such an impression upon my mind as the instruction of my mother—neither can I conceive that to any child there can be one who will have such influence over the young heart as the mother who has so tenderly cared for her offspring.

We should especially tell our children our own experience, for so it is enjoined in this passage—"When your son asks you in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God has commanded you? Then you shall say unto your son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand." Perhaps, my Friend, there is no testimony that you can bear which will be so useful, so interesting and so striking, as the testimony of what you have, yourself, seen and handled of the Word of Life. Tell the Gospel as you find it in the Bible, but set it in the frame of your own experience of its preciousness! Tell your son how you sinned and how the Lord had mercy upon you. Tell him how He met with you, how you were brought to seek His face, how you were born again, how you received a new heart and a right spirit. He will think the more of this great change because it happened to his father, or to his mother, or to some kind friend. And, perhaps, if he is not himself converted as a child, in his later life he may think of what you told him or the remembrance of his mother's God may rise before him when he is far away from the scenes of his youth and has spent many years in foolish vanities—and he may even then turn to God, beckoned back to the great Father's House above by the memory of his godly father and mother here below.

It is my earnest desire, just now, to bear witness on the behalf of many of God's people while I try to explain the meaning of our text, "He brought us out. . .that He might bring us in." We shall have three heads to our discourse. First, *we were brought out.* As surely as Israel was brought out of Egypt, we who believe in Jesus have been brought out of the house of our bondage! Therefore, secondly, *we are out.* And thirdly, the Lord who brought us out *will bring us into another and a better country*—into "Your land, O Immanuel"—into that place of rest and everlasting jubilee which God by Covenant has given over to His people as their perpetual possession.

I. First, dear Friends, let us speak upon the fact that we were BROUGHT OUT. Our text says, "He brought us out from there." That is, Jehovah, the God of Israel, brought His people out from the house of bondage and, in like manner, we bear our testimony that the Lord has delivered us from the bondage of sin and Satan.

Our witness, therefore, is, first of all, that *God has had to do with us.* Some there are who think that God dwells far away, shut up in eternal seclusion. But we have not found it so, for He has had dealings in mercy with us. They suppose that the things here below are too little and too commonplace for God to consider, but it has not been so with us, for He has dealt well with His servants according to His Word. They suppose that there is a thick veil that shuts us out from the Invisible, a great gulf that parts us poor mortals from any communication with God. They smile and turn upon their heels when we begin to talk of God—they are "agnostics"—know-nothings. Perhaps they will not say that there is no God, but they *do* say that they do not know whether there is a God or not! And, as to any communication between the Holy One of Israel and such poor creatures as we are, they will not believe it to be possible. Well, then, we have to bear our testimony upon this point and it is this—that with some of us a very little while ago, and with others of us so many years ago as to be among the memories of our youth—God had solemn dealings. We were in the land of darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death. We were fond of sin—we were slaves to it and we had no wish nor will to escape from it—but He who is the Father of our spirits, having loved us with an everlasting love, and having made a Covenant with His only-begotten Son on our behalf, tore the heavens and in majesty came down!

This was done *spiritually*, for God is a Spirit and, therefore, they who were round about us knew it not. And we ourselves saw Him not and beheld no similitude—neither heard we any voice with our outward ear. But, though it was spiritual, God's coming to us was very real, for spirit is as real as matter and God is as real as the things that we touch, or see, or feel. We are not deceived in this matter, or, if we are, it has become so much a matter of daily consciousness, as well as of past memory, that we must be, indeed, besotted beyond all conception! But it has not been a dream to us, for it has changed our whole lives and it does, today, affect and move us most powerfully. We can imagine that it is a dream that we eat and drink, but it is no dream that God lives in us and we live in Him! It may be a dream that we have grown up from childhood into manhood—though it would take a great deal of argument to prove

that to us—but it is no dream that, whereas we were blind, now we see! It is no dream that, whereas we were dead, now we live! It is no dream that things we did not believe in are now to us the best and highest and most practical of facts! It is not a dream that God has dealt with us and, though we cannot expect men to believe us, we feel sure that, had they known what we know, they would have been as little doubtful about it as we are. Had they passed through the experience we have had, they would have been as dogmatic in their assertion about it as we take leave to be.

Though we may be thought fools for this confidence, we think we are not fools. In other matters we are at least the equals of the men who think us fools as to our religion—and we can reason as well as they. If they have understanding, we have understanding, also. And, at any rate, we are quite willing to leave the matter to the test of the next world. You see, Beloved, we have two strings to our bow—if we should turn out to have been wrong and should die like dogs, we shall be none the worse—whereas, if our beliefs turn out to be well-founded, the ungodly will be in a sorry case, indeed! So we bear our witness without any kind of fear or shame, or any alarm about being thought fools for it, and we say that God has dealt with our spirits. Our spirit has spoken to His Spirit, and His Spirit has spoken to our spirit, and there have been Divine communications to us from the great God who made us, who, we assert, has new-made us and brought us out of our former condition into another and a better state. So, with the Israelites, we can say, "He brought us out."

In describing this bringing out, I have to remind you that the Christian's life runs parallel with the life of Israel in Egypt.

In order to get Israel out of Egypt, the first thing was *to make Israel loathe Egypt.* When Israel was in Goshen and the land brought forth plentifully, Israel was like sheep in clover and, like a bullock that loves deep pasture, had no desire to come out from the fat Delta of the Nile. Israel prospered, Israel was great. Was not Joseph at the head of the State? And even after his death, did not the memory of Joseph still make every Egyptian respect the Israelites? They would have lived there, still—there would have been no coming out of Egypt, for Israel, if all had gone well with them there. The Lord saw that the first thing to be done, in preparation for the people's emancipation, was to make them loathe Egypt. So there arises a new king that knows not Joseph, a king who considers that the existence of a foreign people in the midst of his nation is a source of danger. He must begin, if possible, to reduce their numbers. They shall work for him and render the unpaid labor of slaves. When they do this and still multiply, they shall find their own straw with which to make the bricks. When they complain of this, they shall have the tale of the bricks doubled until they begin to sigh and cry and groan by reason of their taskmasters.

If you had met an Israelite ten years before the period of slavery and had said to him, "Do you feel at home in Egypt?" he would have answered," Certainly! Everything prospers with us—we cannot do better than be here." But afterwards, if you had met him and put to him the same question, he would have said, "Wish to stay in Egypt? Not I! Would God I could escape from the taskmaster! It is cruelty from morning to

night and a toil that is terrible. And I have heard"—and the strong man would stand and weep as he told the story—"I have heard that now there is an edict issued that our male children shall be cast into the river, so that, if we have a son born into our house, it will be, indeed, an unbearable sorrow, for our children must be destroyed by the tyrant." It was a great step towards the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose when He made Israel to feel that Egypt was a house of bondage.

It is in some such way as this that God makes His own elect to feel that the state of nature—the worldly, natural, sinful state—is a state of bondage. Look at the multitude of our fellow men—they have no wish to enter into any other state, they are quite satisfied with the condition in which they now are. Provided that they can earn good wages, that they can make money, that they can enjoy themselves in the pleasures of this life, they do not want anything more. You seem to be as those that mock when you talk to them about another world—they have enough difficulty to make both ends meet in this world, they say! You speak about a judgment to come—they would be a deal more impressed with some information about the police courts than about the Last Dread Assize when the Judge of All shall sit upon the Great White Throne! No, if they do not believe themselves to be mere beasts, to live and die, and then that will be an end of them, yet they *act as if that were their belief*. It is so with the most of our fellow men and it was so with you and with me in our unregenerate state. If we could have had our choice, we would have had a good time of it here, perhaps taking as our motto, "A short life and a merry one." Or, if we were more prudent, we would have wished to have a well-ordered, moral, upright life in which we could be respectable and respected, and that would have satisfied us. O Sirs, it is a miracle of Grace that God has made us to loathe that old land of Egypt and to count it to be a house of bondage! And now, to live unto ourselves is slavery! To live for this world seems to us to be the meanest and most beggarly thing that can be!

That was the first thing, then, that God did towards bringing out His people—He made them to loathe Egypt.

The next thing He did was, *to make them see His wrath upon Egypt*—the plagues that He sent. They had, no doubt, looked upon the Egyptians as being a very happy people, like themselves. They were, for a time, birds of a feather. But now they see all Egypt made the target for Jehovah's thunderbolts! At one time, all is darkness. At another time, the very air is filled with lice and flies. One day the frogs come up everywhere, even into the king's chambers. At another hour, boils and sores are on man and beast and, at the appointed period, there comes a shower of fire and the fire is mingled with hail! And the fire runs along the ground and terrific claps of thunder come, peal upon peal, one after the other, and Israel thinks, "This is a poor country to live in. We must rise up and be gone! If God deals thus with the Egyptians, God grant that we may not be Egyptians! Let us clear out of this land as soon as we can."

So has God made some of us see His judgments upon guilty men. We have walked through the world with our eyes open and we have seen men as others do not see them—with the leprosy of sin white upon their brow! We have seen them with the fever of lust which nothing could

abate. We have seen them droop and die and, with our eyes open, we have seen them pass into that region which is divided forever from all hope by a great gulf, so that they that would pass from us to them cannot, neither can they come to us that would pass from there! Yes, and our spirits have listened till we have heard in dread and fear the weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth of souls that passed away unforgiven, without God and without hope! We have heard that this city is to be burned up, for it is the City of Destruction and, burdened as we were, we began to run from it that we might, perhaps, escape before God should pour out the full vials of His vengeance upon men. I am talking no dreams now, or, at any rate, they are such dreams as I have had when I am most awake—such dreams as some here present have had, and such dreams as have made us anxious to get away from this present evil world which lies in the Wicked One, that we may not be destroyed with it in the day of God's righteous wrath!

Furthermore, dear Friends, God brought His people out of Egypt *by breaking the power which held them in bondage*. When they wished to get away from Pharaoh, they could not, for he held them as his slaves. But in due time God began to deal with Pharaoh and, at last, when He had killed the first-born in all the land, and the chief of all the strength of Egypt, they could not hold in captivity a single Israelite, no, not even a cow or a sheep or a goat that belonged to Israel! The power of Egypt was so completely broken that not a hoof was left behind!

And there came a day with us when the power of sin was finally broken. We sat at the foot of the Cross looking up weeping and wondering, and all of a sudden, as we believed in Jesus, we learned the meaning of the angel's message to Joseph, "You shall call His name, JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins." And then and there He saved us from our sins! The guilt of sin was gone but, what was stranger, still, *the power of sin was gone, too*. We had proven the truth of the Apostle's words, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the Law, but under Grace." With the crimson blood that bought our pardon, there fell the white and sparkling drops that cleansed our nature! The water with the blood delivered us from the guilt and power of sin and we were free, strangely free! We wondered how it was that we had not the desires and passions and inclinations that we used to have, or, if they came, we had a new life and power with which we fought with them hand to hand. We welcomed them no more as friends, but we spurned them as our worst foes, for God had delivered us from the great bondage we were under! Sin is a thing abhorred and detested by us and our spirit has come clean out from under its power as a reigning force!

Remember also, Beloved, that when the Lord broke the power of Egypt over Israel, *it was on the night of the Passover that He did it.* That was the final blow that fell when the Israelites had slain the paschal lamb and sprinkled its blood upon the lintel and the two side posts of their houses. When Jehovah saw the blood, then He passed over them in such a wondrous way that they, also, passed over the Egyptians and marched out of the land more than conquerors through Him that had bled for them under the emblem of the paschal lamb!

Beloved, that redemption has been accomplished for us, also! It is not everyone who can remember the very day and hour of his deliverance, but, as I told you the other morning, of Richard Knill, who said, "At such a time of the day, clang went every harp in Heaven, for Richard Knill was born again," it was even so with me! I looked to Jesus and as I looked, I lived, and then and there I came clean out from that old slavery in which I had dwelt up to that hour! Blessed be the name of God for that glorious emancipation!

Yet once more upon this part of our text, "He brought us out" when, after being set free, *we were violently pursued by our old sins.* The Israelites went up harnessed, marching in their ranks and, I doubt not, singing as they went because they were delivered from the daily task and from the cruel bondage. But suddenly they turned their heads while they were marching, for they heard a dreadful noise behind them, a noise of chariots and of men shouting for battle! And, at last, when they could really see the Egyptians and the thick cloud of dust rising behind them, then they feared that they would be destroyed, they should now fall by the hand of the enemy. You remember, Beloved, after your conversion (it may not have happened to you all, but it did to me), there came a time when the enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil! My lust shall be satisfied upon them! I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." So Satan, loath to leave a soul, pursues it quickly. He will have it back if he can. And often, soon after conversion, there comes a time of dreadful conflict—when the soul seems as if it could not live. "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that the Lord brought us into this condition of temporary freedom, that we might be all the more distressed by our adversaries?" So said Unbelief!

But you recollect how God brought His people right out by one final stroke. Miriam knew it when she took her timbrel and went forth with the women, and answered them in the jubilant song, "Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea!" I love best of all that note in the song of Moses where he says, "The depths have covered them." "There remained not so much as one of them." What gladness must have been in the hearts of the children of Israel when they knew that their enemies were all gone! I am sure it was so with me, for after my conversion, being again attacked by sin, I saw the mighty stream of redeeming love roll over all my sins and this was my song, "The depths have covered them!" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us!"

II. There has been so much in the first part of our subject—"He brought us out"—that I must speak only very briefly upon our second division which is, WE ARE OUT.

That is to say, dear Friends, we are out of the bondage of sin and death, *never to be captured again, and never to go back again of our own free will.* "Oh," says one, "that is strong teaching." I do not care whether it is strong or weak, it is *Bible* teaching! Our Lord Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto

them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." To the woman at the well our Savior said, "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." The work of the Holy Spirit is no temporary regeneration, but one that really makes the man new forever—and the devil, himself, cannot undo the work! No, dear Friend, if God brings you up out of Egypt, you shall never go back again into the house of bondage!

I heard, the other day, of a woman who came, at the end of a certain revival meeting, to make a confession of her faith. She said she had been regenerated six times! Now, I have heard and read in the Bible of people being born again, but to be born again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again is *not* what I have read *anywhere* in the Scriptures, or, if such a thing is possible—if being born again does not finally save men, remember that awful warning of the Apostle, "It is impossible. . . if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." The Word of God is very explicit about that matter. "For the earth which drinks in the rain that comes often 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 unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."

Our Savior also said, "Salt is good: but if the salt has lost its savor, with what shall *it* be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out." You cannot imagine that a person can be regenerated twice! If the work of regeneration is accomplished once, and it does not save the soul, then there is no salvation for it! That is all God ever will do and, therefore, do I bless and glorify His name that there never was and never shall be an instance in which He has made a man a new creature in Christ Jesus—and then the work of Grace has failed! There are plenty who come near to this point and who seem, sometimes, to have really reached it—but rest assured of this, Beloved, if the Lord *has* brought you forth out of this captivity, none shall ever undo what God has done! We are out. *We are out.* "He that believes and is baptized *shall be saved*." We hold to that plain and blessed Truth of God! Of old, the Lord said, "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." Nothing can be more definite and explicit than that. We are bound for the land of Canaan, and into Canaan we shall go!

We are out. That is, *we are now separated unto the Lord.* If we are, indeed, what I have described, we do not belong, in the fullest sense, to any country or to any people, but we belong to God—we are separate from all people upon the face of the earth! You cannot make anything but a Jew of a Jew. You may do what you like with him, but he always remains a Jew. And you cannot make anything of a Christian but a Christian. Put him where you may, he is still a Christian. Whatever sphere of social life he occupies, or in whatever country he dwells, he is always a Christian. I was never ashamed of being an Englishman except when I have seen an Englishman behaving wrongly towards other people. Then I have felt as if I would be a Frenchman, or anything else! But I would be a Christian, first of all, and above all! When I am a Christian, I know no

nationality. We are cosmopolites—inhabitants of every place, wherever we may be—if we are inhabitants of the holy city which is above. Our citizenship is in Heaven. Therefore we are separated from all the rest of mankind. The world knows us not because it knew not our Lord. May God separate us more and more unto Himself!

But we are separated that we may be *preserved by the Lord and blessed by the Lord,* for Israel, when brought out of Egypt, had to live by manna that dropped daily from Heaven, and by water that gushed out of the Rock. That is how all Christians ought to live. You are not to depend, now, upon the world—you are to depend upon God for everything—for your bread and for your water, and for all your needs. The whole of your life is to be in Him—not only that which is spiritual, but even that which is outward and visible is still to be a life in Christ, and a life for Christ—for you are dead to the world and your life is hid with Christ in God. The Lord said, even by the mouth of Balaam, "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Oh, what a mercy it is to be out of Egypt in that respect!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, whatever our condition may be, here, we are out of *Egypt en route for the Glory land.* He who brought us out of Egypt will bring us into Canaan. Our home is not here. Our feet are not fixed upon this narrow plot of earth—they are moving towards another country, that is, a heavenly one.

III. I can only just touch upon the last part of our text—HE WILL BRING US— for our time has gone. But I want to say this much about it.

The Lord brought us out *on purpose that He might bring us in.* He did not bring us out merely for what we are now, but also for what we are yet to be. If Israel had only been what she ought to have been, she would have been into Canaan almost as soon as she was out of Egypt! And if you and I were all we ought to be, we would, even here, enjoy full happiness, for there is a Heaven below, and there is a rest for the people of God which we find in Christ even now.

So, next, *the delay is caused by our unfitness.* The Israelites were unbelieving, so they had to wander for 40 years in the wilderness before the nation entered upon its heritage in the land of Canaan. And it is because you and I are so carnal and there is so much of unbelief about us, that we go up and down, backwards and forwards, and do not fully enter into the possession of the glorious privileges which are ours by Covenant right. Yet, even here, we who have believed enter into rest! We have a foretaste of Heaven, we have the first-fruits of the Spirit. We have tasted the grapes of Eshcol and we are longing to cross the Jordan and to be—

"Where our dear Lord His vineyard keeps,
And all the clusters grow."

The Lord brought us out with this design, that He might bring us in. It is clear that He *who brought us out can bring us in.* That which remains to be done is not as much as that which has already been done. There is not half as much difficulty between here and Heaven as there lies *behind* us—between here and our fallen condition. Atonement has been made and that is the greatest work of all! Sin has been put away, eternal life has come into these dead souls and merely to keep that flame alive, albeit it needs Divine Power, yet is a small thing compared with the putting

of the Light of God within us and the redeeming us from sin, death and Hell!

He brought us out and He will bring us in, *otherwise He would lose all that He has done.* If the Lord does not bring us into Glory, then the precious blood of Christ has been shed in vain and the Holy Spirit has operated upon our hearts in vain. If God does not finish His work upon us and in us, then men and devils will say that He began to build, but He could not finish. A soul in whom the Lord does not finish His work would be a monument for the eternal derision of Satan and all his hosts—and that shall never be! God's eternal purpose would fail if He did not bring us in. Let us, therefore, trust in Him, and say, "He will bring us in." Despite the Girgashites, the Hittites and all the other "ites," He will bring us in! Across the Jordan we shall go with our Joshua, Jehovah-Jesus, at our head and we shall take our possession, everyone of us, in that glorious land and stand in our lot in that day, as surely as He has brought us out.

The important point for us to settle is—Has the Lord, indeed, brought us out? If any of you are still in bondage, the Lord make you to feel your bondage! The Lord make you to cry out in the bitterness of your soul! That is half-way towards getting out—that feeling of loathing for your present state is half the battle of your coming out of Egypt! The Lord make you to cry and groan, and look right out of yourselves wholly to the Lord Jesus and if, by the grip of faith, you get hold of my Master's garments, there is none that shall make you lose your hold, for, if you have a hold on Him, He has a firmer hold on you! If you have but touched Him with the finger of faith, He has laid His eternal power under bond to save you and He must and will accomplish the work, great as it is! God has laid help upon One who is mighty, and that mighty One shall never fail. Oh, the bliss of being in Christ! It is to be out of Egypt and it is to have the certain prospect of being, by-and-by, in Heaven!

God bless you all, dear Friends, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
DEUTERONOMY 6.

Verse 1. *Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you go to possess it.* God's commandments are to be taught, but they are also to be practiced—"which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that you might *do* them." And it is this doing of them that is the hard part of the work. It is not always easy to teach them—a man needs the Spirit of God if he is to teach them aright—but practice is harder than preaching. May God grant us Grace, whenever we hear His Word, to do it!

2. *That you might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, you, and your son, and your son's son, all the days of your life; and that your days may be prolonged.* The fear of God must always be a practical power in our lives—"that you might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments." And that practical fear should lead us into obedience in de-

tail. We ought so to study God's Word that we endeavor "to keep *all* His statutes and His commandments." A slipshod obedience is disobedience. We must be careful and watchful to know the Divine will and in all respects to carry it out. You who are His children, dwelling in such a household, and with such a Father, it well becomes you to be obedient children. No, it is not only for us to obey the command of the Lord our God, but we should pray till the rest of the verse also comes true—"you, and your son, and your son's son," our children and our children's children. I am sure that if we love God, we shall long that our children and our children's children may love Him, too. If your trade has supported you and brought you in a competence, you will naturally wish to bring your son up to it. But, on a far higher platform, if God has been a good God to you, your deepest desire will be that your son and your son's son should serve the same Divine Master through all the days of their life! "That your days may be prolonged." God does not give long life to all His people, yet in obedience to God is the most probable way of securing long life. There are also many of God's saints who are spared in times of pestilence, or who are delivered by an act of faith out of great dangers. That ancient declaration of God often comes true in these later times, "As the days of a tree are the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." At any rate, you who love the Lord shall live out your days, whereas the wicked shall not live out half their days. You shall complete the circle of life, whether it is a great circle or a little one—with long life will God satisfy you, and show you His salvation. The passage which now follows is held in very great esteem by the Jewish people even to this day. They repeat it frequently, for it forms part of their morning and evening services.

3, 4. *Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with you, and that you may increase mightily, as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you, in the land that flows with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.* There is but one God. This is the very basis of our faith—we know nothing of "gods many and lords many." Yet it is the *Triune God* whom we worship. We are not less Unitarians, in the highest meaning of that word, because we are Trinitarians! We are not less Believers in the one living and true God because we worship Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

5. *And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.* Does not this show what is the very Nature of God? God is Love, for He commands us to love Him!! There was never an earthly prince or king whom I have heard of in whose statute book it was written, "You shall love the king." No. It is only in the Statute Book of Him who is the Lord of Life and Love that we read such a command as this! To my mind it seems a very blessed privilege for us to be permitted to love One so great as God is. Here it is we find our Heaven! It is a command, but we regard it rather as a loving, tender invitation to the highest bliss—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart"—that is, *intensely*. "And with all your soul"—that is, most *sincerely*, most *lovingly*. "And with all your might." With all your energy, with every faculty, with every possibility of your nature.

6. *And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart.* Oh, how blessed to have them written on the heart by the Holy Spirit! We can never get them there except He who made the heart anew shall engrave upon these fleshy tablets the Divine Precepts.

7. *And you shall teach them diligently unto your children.* Christian parent, have you done this? "You shall" not only teach them, but, "teach them diligently unto your children."

7. *And shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.* Our common talk should be much more spiritual than it often is. There is no fear of degrading sacred subjects by the frequent use of them—the fear lies much the other way—lest by a disuse of them we come to forget them. This blessed Book, the Holy Word of God, is a fit companion for your leisure as well as for your labor, for the time of your sleeping and the time of your waking. It will bless you in your private meditations and equally cheer the social hearth and comfort you when, in mutual friendship, you speak, the one with the other. Those who truly love God greatly love His holy Word.

8. *And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand.* They shall be your practical guide, at your fingertips, as it were.

8. *And they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.* You shall see *by* them, you shall see *with* them, you shall see *through* them.

9. *And you shall write them upon the posts of your house and on your gates.* I could almost wish that this were literally fulfilled much more often than it is. I was charmed, in many a Swiss village, to see a text of Scripture carved on the doorpost. A text hung up in your houses may often speak when you are silent. We cannot do anything that shall be superfluous in the way of making known the Word of God.

10-12. *And it shall be, when the LORD your God shall have brought you into the land which He swore unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you great and goodly cities, which you built not, and houses full of all good things, which you filled not, and wells dug, which you dug not, vineyards and olive trees, which you planted not; when you shall have eaten and are full; then beware lest you forget the LORD, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.* Bread eaten is soon forgotten. How often we act like dogs that will take the bones from our hand and then forget the hand that gave them! It should not be so with us. All our spiritual mercies and many of our temporal ones are very much like the inheritance of Israel in the land of Canaan—wells that they did not dig, and vineyards which they did not plant. Our blessings come from sources that are beyond our own industry and skill. They are the fruits of the holy inventiveness of God and the splendor and fullness of His thoughtfulness towards His poor children. Let us not forget Him, since evidently He never forgets us!

13-15. *You shall fear the LORD your God, and serve Him, and shall swear by His name. You shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you, (for the LORD your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and destroy you from off the face of the earth.* Our God is a jealous God. One said to a Puritan, "Why be so precise?" and he replied, "Be-

cause I serve a precise God." God has done so much for us, in order to win our hearts, that He ought to have them altogether for Himself. When He has them all, it is all too little—but to divide our heart is to grieve His Spirit and sorely to vex Him.

16-24. *You shall not tempt the LORD your God, as you tempted Him in Massah. You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and His testimonies, and His statutes, which He has commanded you. And you shall do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, to cast out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has spoken. And when your son asks you in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God has commanded you? Then you shall say unto your son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: and the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: and He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore unto our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.* Oh, Friends, it will be well when our boys and girls ask us questions like this and when we can give such answers! The great lack of the age in which we live is obedience to God. "Modern thought" has flung off obedience to Divine Revelation—and even in matters relating to social morality, many men reject all idea of anything being commanded of God—they only judge by what appears to them to be either pleasurable or profitable. What is most needed just now is that we, ourselves, and those about us become really conscious of the greatness and Sovereignty of God—and yield ourselves to Him to do as He bids us, when He bids us, where He bids us—and in all things to seek to follow His commandments that He may "preserve us alive, as it is at this day."

25. *And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us.* That would have been Israel's righteousness if the people had observed to do all these commandments before the Lord. But it was marred and spoiled by disobedience. We rejoice to know that we who believe in Jesus have a righteousness unto which Israel did not attain, for the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, is our righteousness!

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

HEARING WITH HEED
NO. 2512

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 11, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 9, 1885.

"And He said unto them, Take heed what you hear: with what measure you use, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given."
Mark 4:24.

In these days we have many instructions as to preaching, but our Lord principally gave directions as to *hearing*. The first part of our text, "Take heed what you hear," may be viewed as a note of discrimination. Be careful what you hear—hear the Truth of God and only the Truth of God! It does seem to me as if some people say, "Here is a place of worship. There is sure to be a sermon, let us go in and hear it." Ah, but all that is preached is not Gospel and it is not all hearing that will be valuable to your souls! Especially at this present time it is incumbent upon Christians to learn how to use the discerning faculty with regard to what is and what is not the Truth of God. Would you eat all meat indiscriminately without tasting and testing its quality? If so, would you not soon be ill? Does a man take any drug that may happen to be upon the chemist's shelves? Does he not expect great care to be exercised in the doctor's dispensary, lest he should be taking poison where he hoped for a salutary medicine? Remember what the Apostle John says, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." And when you know what the Truth of God is, be not ready to listen to that which is contrary to it, or you will rue the day in which you lent your ears to the deceiver! Ulysses was not unwise when he sealed the ears of his sailors while they passed by the rocks of the sirens, for they sang so sweetly that they tempted mariners to run their ships upon the rocks where they would be wrecked. So dear Friends, with sealed ears, pass by those who have nothing to communicate that can tend to your spiritual edification—and thus carry out our Savior's words, "Take heed what you hear."

This command is also a very clear note of warning. We take heed what we eat and what we drink. Every person who desires to have health does that. And shall we be careless of what we hear? May we not, by hearing error and falsehood, engender disease in our spirit and bring our soul into sin, sorrow and eternal ruin? Time is too short for us to be listening to every babbler! Heaven and earth are too important for us to be running any risk concerning our eternal state by giving heed to the speculations of evil men!

But I am going to use the text in another sense, namely, as a word of awakening to you who are hearers. I do not think that I need to say to the most of you, "Hear the Word," for, if ever there were people who loved

to hear the Word of God, they are to be found in this congregation, willing to come not only on the Sabbath, but on week-nights, too, to hear the preaching of the Word! May you, as well as the city of Glasgow, flourish by the preaching of the Word! May your souls be fat and flourishing as you are willing to hear the Word! But, alas, there are many to whom it is necessary to give an exhortation even to come and hear the Gospel! It is getting far too commonly so in London—the vast proportion of our population does not care about hearing preaching. There is a good deal of the preaching that they need not care much to hear, especially poor people who cannot understand the Latinized English, whereas, if our glorious old Anglo- Saxon mother tongue were used, I guarantee you that we would find people coming to hear much more numerously than they do!

Notice, dear Friends, that there is in our text, first, a *precept*—"Take heed what you hear." There is, secondly, a *proverb*—"With what measure you use, it shall be measured to you." And there is, thirdly, *a promise*—"And unto you that hear shall more be given."

I. First, here is a PRECEPT which ought to be dear to our souls. If God commands anything, we ought to wish to know what it is that He commands.

Take heed, then, what you hear. That is, *hear with attention.* Do not hear heedlessly, for that is not really to hear. There is a mode of attending a place of worship which cannot be of much service because the person attending is three parts asleep. He is not sufficiently asleep for his neighbor to nudge him, but he is quite sufficiently asleep to require to nudge himself and wake himself up! A great many persons, when they come to a place of worship, are like what I sometimes find upon my garden wall. It looks like a chrysalis, but when I take it up, I find that the living thing has flown away. Here is the chrysalis of a man, but where is the man, himself? Oh, he is at home! He is planning what he is going to do tomorrow, or he is thinking about what he did not do on Saturday! How often is it that a hearer's ears are nothing better than a mere trumpet—what is said goes in and goes out, again—and nothing remains. I like that kind of hearing of which I heard concerning a boy who was noticed always to be drinking in what the preacher said. He would lean forward, and listen with eyes, and ears and mouth all open! His mother said, "John, what makes you so attentive ?" "Why, Mother," he answered, "I heard that if there was any part of the sermon that was likely to be blessed to our souls, it was just then that the devil would try to make us inattentive. So I made up my mind that I would hear every bit of it so that God might bless me by it." If we always had such hearers as that boy, we would be sure to have faith worked in them and God would be glorified in their salvation!

"Take heed what you hear," so as to *hear for yourselves* with a personal application of the Truth of God. "Friends, Romans, countrymen," said the orator, "lend me your ears." If anyone makes the same request to you, tell him that you cannot lend your ears, for you need them yourselves! A man said once, "While I was at the service this morning, I was hearing for a man whom I saw in the aisle. I wondered what he was thinking of the sermon." Never you mind the man in the aisle—breathe a prayer to God for a blessing on him, but hear the Word of the Lord for

yourself! Hear it personally! Look, there is a group of ten or 12 people met in a parlor and there is a legal-looking gentleman with a document in front of him. He is reading somebody's "last will and testament." It is very dry reading. If you could listen through the keyhole, I do not think you would stay long to hear it. It is about freeholds, leaseholds, properties and I know not what—but just look at the attention of the hearers!. Do you see that brother of the testator? The lawyer has just read the clause about one hundred pounds that is left to him. The old man has his ear-trumpet up to his ear till he hears that piece! And now that the will passes on to, "my nephew Thomas," down goes the ear-trumpet, for the old man does not care what is left to Thomas!

There are two young people in the corner who have been expecting something and they are getting very eager, for the will has gone through a number of items and it has not mentioned them. Now see their attention, how they brighten up, and look at one another as the lawyer reads, "To my dear grandchild Jane and her husband, I leave _____." Now they will catch every syllable! I am sure they will and when it is done, they will say, "Would you mind reading that piece again?" It is so deeply interesting to them because it concerns them *personally*. I want that illustration to live with you, for that is the way to hear the Gospel preached—waiting till it comes to the piece that especially concerns yourself and till that comes, saying, "I dare not claim that promise, I must not take that comfort, for I am not the character described." When, at last, there comes the portion that is your own, then just drink it in and say to yourself, "I would like to hear that again, for it means *me*—there is something in that just suitable for me." O men and women, you have not heard the Gospel aright unless you have heard it as your own Gospel—unless you have discovered in it a finger pointing to yourself—your own name, your own character, written there!

Then, dear Friends, if you would take heed what you hear, *hear retentively,* endeavoring to *remember* the Truth. It is a good thing to carry home as much as you can from the preaching of the Gospel. Eat it on the spot! Probably that is the best way to carry it away with a certainty! What a man eats at the table will not be stolen from him by a thief on the road home! And if you take in every Word, as you hear it, into your very soul, saying, "O God, bless it to me now!" you will retain it to a certainty! But do take heed that the sermon shall not be finished when the last word is spoken. Let not our *finis* be *your finis,* but let our ending be your beginning! Ministers ought to finish up with the practical application—and that is where the hearer ought to begin. And he should continue to make the practical application to himself through all his life.

Then, dear Friends, hear *desiringly.* What a blessed kind of hearing that is when a man hears with longing, wishing, hungering all the way through the sermon! When the fish are hungry, then is the time for fishing, and when souls hunger and thirst after righteousness, *then* is the time for preaching! Over there is a broken-hearted sinner and he is saying, "Oh, that I could hear something about a Savior!" Yonder is another soul that has been crying and praying for mercy and has not found it—and he is saying, "Oh, that I might discover the way of mercy!" I try with all my might so to preach that souls may not miss the way of salvation!

When I was here, last week, and saw some eight friends who came to confess their faith, I was a little disappointed that out of that number there were only two who had been blessed under my ministry. But a Brother to whom I mentioned it said, "Well, Sir, I can bear witness that I have heard sermons from you of late of which I have said that if I had been unconverted, I must have been brought to the Lord through hearing those sermons, for they did so earnestly press sinners to come to Christ, and they did set the Gospel so plainly before the hearers." I felt that I could conscientiously agree with what that good Brother said, for, if I have not preached the Gospel, I have meant to do it. And if I have not made you understand it, I have tried to make it as plain as ever I could.

If I liked to do so, I fancy that I could preach a very fine sermon—one that would please gentlemen who are fond of oratory—but that high-flown style of preaching seems to me to be wicked so long as souls are perishing! And I am determined, as far as ever I can, to preach the Gospel plainly and simply so that everybody may understand it. If occasionally I make you smile, I do not mind, because sometimes I can get the Truth of God into your heart that way when I cannot get it in any other way. If you only get to Christ, it does not matter to me whether you come laughing or crying so long as you are really brought to Him. We long to bring our hearers to the Savior and, therefore, we need them to so hear that they shall hunger and thirst after the living God! And when they do that, they will be sure to find Him before long.

One thing more. Take heed that you *hear obediently.* That is to say, put in practice what you hear, for it is no use to hear unless you do so. You say to a man, "You have need of such-and-such a diet in order that you may be restored to health," and he says, "I thank you," but he never uses that diet—and then complains that he is not any better. Another says, "I have been to such-and-such a doctor, and I have paid him a guinea for his advice, but I am no better." The doctor sees the man, and he says, "Did you take the medicine that I prescribed for you?" "Well, no, Sir, I am not partial to medicine." "And what have you been eating?" When he tells him, the doctor says, "Why, those are the very things that I said you were *not* to touch! Have you taken so-and-so?" "No, I did not like the taste of it, so I have not gone on with it." If he is a sensible doctor, he says, "Why did you come to me? If you are no better, can you blame me?" "But I had your prescription, Sir! I took it home with me and put it in a cupboard. I would have been greatly distressed if I had lost it on the way home." "But you have not taken the medicine?" "No, Sir, no, I have not, but I have your prescription all right."

So people say, "I hear the Gospel regularly. I would not be absent on the Sabbath and I go out on a Thursday evening and listen to the preacher." "But they have not all obeyed the Gospel," wrote Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, and that is what we still have sorrowfully to say—so many remain *hearers* only, but not *doers* of the Word.

II. Now I am going to turn to the second part of the subject, which is, A PROVERB. The text says, "With what measure you use, it shall be measured to you." You shall have your corn measured back to you with your own bushel.

What does this mean in reference to this subject? Just this—the Hearer of the Gospel will get measure for measure, and the measure shall be his own measure. For instance, *those who have no interest in* the *Word find it uninteresting.* A man comes to listen to the Gospel without any interest in the Gospel—he does not care an atom what it is or what it is not and, consequently, he finds nothing interesting in the Gospel. If he reads the Bible with no concern at all in it, he finds nothing in it that strikes him. He may read it as a blind man passes through a picture gallery and he may hear the voice of the minister as a deaf man hears music. That is to say, there will be no true seeing or hearing—seeing, he shall not perceive—and hearing, he shall not understand. Come to a service without any interest in it and there shall be nothing interesting to you in it. You have no longing to be saved, no wish to escape from the guilt of sin, no desire for Heaven, no care about God. So, of course, the dullest thing to you in all the world will be a service where Christ is preached! You shall get it measured back to you with your own measure.

Next, *those who desire to find fault, find faults enough.* There are some persons who attend even the House of God with a view simply of finding fault. I have great pleasure, generally, in obliging people who wish to find fault—they shall always have faults enough to find if they want them. There shall be a fault in style, a fault in this, a fault in that and a fault in the other. If you want to find fault—if it is any source of pleasure to you, well, it is no trouble to us, so you can proceed! The critic of the Gospel will find so much to object to in it that he will almost think it was meant for him to object to—and so it *was,* in a measure. The offense of the Cross has not ceased. It is still a stumbling block to you that believe not, and you shall stumble and fall and be broken to pieces by it. Therefore, deceive not your own souls over that matter—with your own measure it shall be measured back to you. What you fish for, you shall catch.

On the other hand, *those who seek the solid Truth of God learn it from any faithful ministry.* Here is a person who comes to hear the Gospel with attention. He says, "I would like to know all about this Gospel. I want to be taught the truth concerning sin and its remedy. I want to know the truth concerning the Holy Spirit and the work that He performs in the heart. I want to hear about the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning Sacrifice, I want to know about the life of a Christian, his comforts, his trials, his joys, his duties." Well, if you hear attentively, desiring to know and to be taught, you shall find much that is worth knowing, much that will attract you, much that will call you to a yet closer attention, much that will make you want to know still more, much that will make you eager to be taken behind the scenes that you may wonder what the parables mean and what the Holy Spirit intends to teach you! I am sure there never was a person who attentively considered the great plan of salvation in its details who did not find much that was well worth his most careful consideration!

Further, *those who hunger find food.* Here is another man who comes, not merely with attention to know, but with a hungry desire to receive the benefit of the Gospel into his own soul and, dear Friends, if you come hungering, you shall be filled, for this is our Savior's declaration—"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for

they shall be filled." What a blessed thing the Gospel is to the man who really wants it! It is a blessed thing to be empty, because then you understand the fullness of Christ! I was standing, one day, under one of the great beech trees in the New Forest, marking with delight the various twists of the branches. The beech tree always has a special charm to me and I thought to myself, "This beech tree greatly interests me." But there was a squirrel running along one of the branches and he stopped and looked at me—and as I was quite still, he looked till he did not want to see any more—and he passed round the trunk, and then came in sight again as he worked his spiral way right up to the top! And I said, "Ah, little squirrel, this beech tree is more to you than it is to me. To me, it is only a thing that I look at with curiosity and interest. But to you, it is your home, it is your granary—you get your beech nuts and hoard them away. And here you live and here you have your young. Winter and summer this is your place of abode. In the summer to sport in and in the winter to hide in. This beech tree is everything to you."

Now, to the mere hearer, the Lord Jesus Christ is just like what that tree was to me. The mere hearer looks at Him with some interest, but to a poor hungry sinner, Jesus Christ is everything! He is a home for his desolation, raiment for his nakedness, food for his hunger, light for his darkness, liberty for his bondage, joy for his despair. He is his Heaven upon earth and his Heaven in Heaven! Dear Friends, this is the way to hear the Gospel—with a great craving hunger of soul, for as much as you really want, that you shall have. If you bring a great measure of need to the sanctuary, the Truth of God shall be measured out to you so as to fill it! Your utmost desires shall be exceeded, for God is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think!

Then, next, *those who bring faith receive assurance.* I will suppose that there is a poor soul here that comes to Christ and says, "I heard the Gospel and I believe it." Very well, then, you shall have more faith given you and, when you have twice as much faith, if you come with that and say, "Lord, I believe more firmly and truly than ever," you shall have as much faith again given you. And then when you come and say, "Lord, I feel confident of it," you shall have twice as much confidence given to you! And when you get that double quantity of confidence and then come and say, "Lord, I am assured, I do believe. I am saved, I am sure of it," you shall have a double quantity of assurance given to you, till you get to "full assurance of faith," for, "with what measure you use, it shall be measured to you." If you measure out an immense amount of faith in Christ, you shall have an immense quantity measured back to your faith!

Is not this a delightful proverb of the Kingdom of Heaven, that every hearer shall receive according to what he brings? If he brings great desire, great attention, great faith—he shall receive just in the same measure, according to the abundant Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. But remember that no man gets saved by an inattentive hearing of the Gospel. No man gets saved by a careless hearing. No man gets saved by a forgetful hearing. No man gets saved by a fitful, occasional hearing of the Gospel—it is God's usual way to save men by their using the means of Grace, by their constantly, attentively, intensely, earnestly hearing the Word of God! There is no merit in merely hearing. There is no merit, even, in faith

in and of itself. God has appended the blessing of faith to hearing and the blessing of salvation to faith. Therefore, give a large measure to God in your hearing that He may give a large measure back to you according to the proverb, "With what measure you use, it shall be measured to you."

III. Now I have to finish with A PROMISE—"Unto you that hear shall more be given."

This is a very great and very gracious word, but I will not speak long upon it. "Unto you that hear, shall more be given." More what? Why, first, more *desire to hear*! It is the man who has heard the Gospel who loves to hear it. I think that the best preaching of the Gospel is when the preacher, himself, enjoys it—when he himself is heartily in love with it—that is a part of the unction that God gives to go with it. When a cook is preparing a dainty dish, I think he smiles as he sends it up to his lord's table. And he has some enjoyment of it himself. I love to preach a Gospel of which I feel the sweetness in my own soul. So, dear Hearer, if you begin to feel the sweetness of hearing the Gospel, you shall feel more of it! Those who are tired of preaching are those who do not often hear it. If it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and you have often heard it, you want to hear it again. You will be like the Duke of Argyll in Rutherford's day, when Rutherford preached about Jesus. The Duke stood up and said, "Ring that bell again, for I love to hear the music of that sweet name." That bell can never be rung too often in the ear that knows its melody, "Unto you that hear shall more be given"—more desire to hear, more delight in hearing will God bestow upon you.

"Unto you that hear shall more be given." That is, *more understanding of what you hear.* At first a man does not understand much of the Gospel. He gets as far as the A B C of it and that saves him. But "unto you that hear shall more be given." There are certain parts of God's Word that we do not yet fully understand. I am speaking for myself and most people. Ought we, then, to read them? Yes, certainly! If you do not understand them, keep on reading them. Why? Because if you were a child and your father wrote you a letter, and there was a part of it that was beyond your comprehension, if you were a sensible child, you would say, "Well, I do not catch my father's meaning, but I shall read his letter again." So, Beloved, say to yourself, "I cannot fully comprehend this Scripture, but I know that my Heavenly Father meant something by it. And I love Him so much that I like to read His very Words, even if I do not catch His meaning,"

As you keep on reading, you will say to yourself, "I understand that sentence, which was not plain before. I have not learned the meaning of all the letter yet, but I shall read it again." You read, and read, and read and, at last, by the reading you read yourself into the understanding of it! I am sure it is so with the study of God's Word. If the Lord had written the Bible all so very plainly, it would have been meant for us when we were merely babes in Grace and there would have been nothing for us as we advanced! Therefore He has written some part of it a little less simply and some way farther on there are greater difficulties, still, on purpose, that when our senses have been exercised by being used, we may come to the fullness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus. If you do not under-

stand the Word that you hear, then hear it again and again till, at last, the Light of God breaks in upon your soul, for, "unto you that hear shall more be given"—more *understanding* of what you hear.

So also, with hearing, shall be given more assurance of the truth of what you hear. Those who reject the Bible are generally people who have never read it. Those who read it, usually receive it, and those who read it more, receive it yet more firmly. Those who hear the Gospel again and again, and again, get more and more sure that it is true. At first they *hope* it is true. Then they *think* it is true. Soon, they *believe* it is true and, farther on, they *know* it is true. And yet farther on they are so delighted because it *is* true that they feel that they could die in the defense of it! "Unto you that hear shall more be given"—you shall become more and more sure of the truth of what you hear.

"Unto you that hear shall more be given." That is, more personal pos*session of the blessings of which you hear*. You shall get a firmer grip of it for yourselves. You shall get a clearer view as to your own interest in it. Once, when Jesus passed by, I touched the hem of His garment with my finger and I was made whole. But when Jesus came nearer, he that had touched His garment's hem came nearer, still, and laid hold upon His hand, bowed at His feet and held Him and said, "I implore You to abide with me." As he went further, he came to lean his head upon the bosom of his Lord. The more you know of Christ and the more you hear about Him, the more shall you feel sure that He is yours and the more shall you abide in Him, trust in Him and find joy and peace through believing in Him.

"Unto you that hear shall more be given." That is, *more delight while hearing the glorious Gospel*. No one of us knows how much God can give to a man. There is a cornucopia, in the hand of God, that is infinitely full of delights to the man who is willing to receive them. He who is a little Christian has little joy. He who gets but little of Christ and hears but little of Christ, has but little comfort. But he who will go into this business, heart and soul, and invest his whole capital of body, soul and spirit in it—he is the man who shall be rich to all the intents of bliss.

"Unto you that hear shall more be given," and yet more, and yet more, and yet more—you shall become holier, stronger, more useful, more happy, more heavenly! That word, "more," is so big that when you have thought about it as much as you like, it is still, "more." And then, when you have expanded your conceptions of it, it is still "more." And when you seem to have gone to your utmost imagination, it is still "more." And when you fancy that you have exaggerated, yet still it is "more," for, "more" must be always more than he who has the largest powers of thought shall ever be able to compass!

Therefore, Beloved, I say to you, in conclusion, let us give to the Gospel that earnest kind of hearing which I have tried to describe. And let us so give it that we get a blessing from the Master as the result. And, first, *hear the Gospel*. You who do not often hear it, I pray you, hear it! It must be wisdom to hear what God has to say. It is so sweet to *our* souls that we want you, also, to hear it. It has done us so much good that we entreat you to hear it. Do not waste your Sabbaths—there are few enough of them in any lifetime—and you will soon be in the place where the toll-

ing of a Sabbath bell will never be heard! Do, dear Friends, you who do not often go to the House of God, do hear the Word. It is the happiest, the wisest, the most profitable way of spending the Sabbath.

And you who do hear, *hear well.* The Word deserves good hearing. It comes from God. It is about your immortal soul. It is about Heaven and Hell. It is about Him who died for sinners. Do not count that a trifle which cost His life's blood! The story deserves most solemn hearing. Remember, if you are an unconverted person, the Gospel is your only hope—you cannot expect to find salvation by going anywhere else than by going to hear the Word of God! The way of salvation is by faith in Christ, but "*faith comes by hearing.*" It is while you are hearing the Gospel that you are led to believe it! Its evidence lies in itself. The Cross enlightens men by its own light! Therefore, do hear all you can about it.

Let me further say to you, dear Friends, *hear often.* I find that when any of those who have regularly come to this place of worship begin to stay away, they do not improve spiritually. A dear Brother who came to see me this week, had been absent for a year and a half. I should have liked you to have seen the joy with which he told me that, though he had been obliged to be away through poverty, he could not longer endure what he had been doing to try to make a living. He had given it up, cost what it might, because he felt that if he did not come to hear the Gospel, he would starve! And he was quite right. I am sure that you cannot absent yourself from the frequent hearing of the Word if you are a Christian, without being like a man who goes without his meals.

If you miss your regular meals, you cannot stay well. You may say, "I ran into such-and-such a place and had something to eat." But it does not do, either for the body or the soul, to have just a little mite of meat here and there. You must especially get your spiritual meals regularly and have them where your soul is really fed. Do not go where it is all fine music and grand talk and beautiful architecture—those things will neither fill anybody's stomach, nor feed his soul. Go where the Gospel is preached, the Gospel that really feeds your soul, and go often!

Lastly, if you have heard well, and heard often, try to *hear still better.* Expect more out of the Gospel. No, more than that, *come to Christ Himself* and get, at one stroke, the choicest blessing you can ever have, namely, immediate and full salvation by faith in Jesus! Then go on to know more and more of what that treasure is and glorify your God, world without end!

May the Lord's blessing rest upon you all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 4:1-25.

Verse 1. *And He began again to teach by the seaside: and there was gathered unto Him a great multitude, so that He entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.* You can easily picture that scene—the Master sitting down in the vessel with a little breathing space of water between Himself and the crowd. And then the multitude on the rising bank, standing one above another, and all gazing upon the Teacher who sat down and taught them. It ought to

reconcile any of you who have to stand in the crowd here when you remember that the hearers all stood in those days—and only the preacher sat down!

2, 3. *And He taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in His doctrine, Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow.* He did not go out to show himself, to let people see how dexterous he was at the art of sowing seed. But he "went out to sow." And every true preacher should go out with this one design—to scatter broadcast the good Seed of the Kingdom, and to try to obtain for it an entrance into the hearts of their hearers.

4. *And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.* He could not help that. It was not his fault, but the fault of the wayside and of the fowls. So, when the Word of God is denied entrance into men's hearts, if it is faithfully preached, the preacher shall not be blamed by his Master—the fault shall lie between the hard heart that will not let the Seed enter in, and the devil who came and took it away.

5. *And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth.* Persons with shallow characters are often very quick in receiving religious impressions, but they also lose them just as quickly. Those who are hasty and impulsive are as easily turned the wrong way as the right way.

6-8. *But when the sun was up, it was scorched and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.* Thank God for that! There were three failures, but there was one success, or, perhaps we might more correctly say, three successes. There were three sorts of ground that yielded nothing, but at last the sower came to a piece of soil that had been well prepared and, therefore, was good ground which yielded fruit, though the quantity varied even there—"some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred."

9. *And He said unto them, He that has ears to hear, let him hear.* Some people have ears, but they have not "ears to hear." They have ears, but they close them to that which they ought to hear. When a man is really willing to listen to the Truth of God, then may God help him to listen with all his heart—spiritually!

10-12. *And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable. And He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.* This judicial blindness had happened to the Jews—they had so long closed their eyes to the Light of God that, at last, God closed them and they were blinded. They had refused to heed so many messages sent to them from the great God that, at last, this sentence was pronounced as the punishment of their sin—that they should die in their sins and that even the preaching of the Word by the mouth of the Lord Jesus, Himself,

should be of no use to them! That is one of the most awful judgments that can ever happen to anyone, when God puts a curse even on a man's blessings—and when the Gospel, which should be a savor of life unto life, becomes a savor of death unto death.

13. *And He said unto them, Know you not this parable? And how, then, will you know all parables?* "For this is one of the simplest of them all. If you do not understand *this* parable, what *will* you understand?"

14, 15. *The sower sows the Word. And these are they by the wayside, where the Word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan comes immediately and takes away the Word that was sown in their hearts.* There is always a bird where there is a seed lying on the road. And there is always a devil where there is a sermon heard but not received into the heart. "Satan comes immediately." He is very prompt. We may delay, but the devil never does. "When they have heard, Satan comes immediately and takes away the Word that was sown in their hearts."

16, 17. *And these are they, likewise, which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the Word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution arise for the Word's sake, immediately they are offended.* These are the people that trouble and grieve the hearts of earnest ministers. And there are some revivalists who never go to a place without getting quite a lot of persons to come forward and say that they are converted. Why, I know a town where, according to the accounts that were put forth by certain preachers, there were so many professed converts every night that all the people in the town must have been converted—and a good many more from the surrounding villages! But nobody can find them now. Were they converted, then? I think not. But that is the style in which much has been done by some whom I might name.

Yet there is some good even in their work! The sower in the parable is not blamed because his work was so evanescent—how could he prevent it? As the soil was so shallow, the apparent result was very quick and the disappointment was equally quick. I do trust, dear Friends, that you will never be satisfied with temporary godliness, with slight impressions soon received and soon lost. Beware of all that is not the work of the Holy Spirit! There must be a breaking up of the iron pan of the heart! There must be a tearing out of the rocks that lie under the soil or else there will be no harvest unto God.

18, 19. *And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the Word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful.* The seed cannot grow in such soil as that. The man is too busy, or he is wholly taken up with pleasure. The women are too proud of themselves, or even of the clothes that cover them. How can there be room for Christ in the inn when it is crowded with other guests?

20. *And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the Word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.* All converts are not equally good. I am afraid that in our churches there is a large number of the thirty-fold people. We are glad to have them, but they are not very brilliant Christians. Oh, for

some sixty-fold converts—some who are fit to be very leaders in the Church of God! And when we get up to a hundred-fold—when it is not merely one hundred per cent, but one hundred gathered for every one sown—then are we indeed rejoiced! When everything that is good is multiplied over, and over, and over, and over, and over again, a hundred for one, and when each one of that hundred bears another hundred—that is the blessing we long to see! This hundred-fold Seed has in it the capacity for almost boundless multiplication! At the first sowing, we get a hundred-fold return. But what comes of the next sowing, and the next, and the next? God send us this style of wheat! May we have a great quantity of it!

21. *And He said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? And not to be set on a candlestick?* So this wheat, then, is meant to be sown! The Word of God is intended to be spread. "Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed?" If it were put under a bed, it would set the bed on fire and so, if you have true Grace in your heart, there is nothing that can smother its light—the fire and the light, together, will force their way out.

22, 23, *For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither anything kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.* Tell out, then, what God has told you—and let everybody hear from you the Truth of God as you, yourself, have heard it. See the compound interest that there is to be in this blessed trading for Christ?

24, 25. *And He said unto them, Take heed what you hear: with what measure you use, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that has, to him shall be given: and he that has not, from him shall be taken even that which he has.* When the Gospel is not received, when a man refuses it, it becomes a positive loss to him. There is a way by which it so works that what a man thought he had, disappears. Some have been made worse by the preaching of that Word which ought to have made them better. May it not be so with any one of us!

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HOW TO PLEASE GOD
NO. 2513

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"But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."
Hebrews 11:6.

"Without faith," says the text, "it is impossible to please God." Yet all men have not faith. Even among those who have heard the Gospel, many have not obeyed it. Isaiah is not the only one who has had to cry, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" If it is so, that, "without faith it is impossible to please God," what becomes of the multitude who have heard, but believed not, to whom the Word of this salvation has come, but who have rejected it? It is to be feared that God may again swear in His wrath, "They shall not enter into My rest." The Israelites could not enter into Canaan because of unbelief— and men in this day cannot enter into the privileges of the Gospel because of unbelief. Let us pity and pray for those who have not faith. Oh, that God would hear the cries of His children and work faith in men, for this, also, is the gift of God! Not only the blessing which He promises, but even the hand whereby we receive it must come from Him!

There are some men who have a kind of faith, and these are, perhaps, in a more dangerous condition than those who have none at all because they are apt to deceive themselves and fancy that they are in a state of Grace, whereas they are still in a state of nature. The faith which pleases God is no mock faith, no dead faith, no false faith, no faith in a lie! It is faith in the Truth of God, it is true faith, it is spiritual faith. The faith that saves the soul and makes it pleasing before God is real faith. Many say that they believe a thing, but they do not truly believe it—it is not real to them. They say, "Yes, such-and-such a doctrine is true," and they write it down in their creed and then put the creed away on the top shelf of their bookcase—and it lies there covered with dust. A man only believes that which affects his life. If it is an important Truth of God, if he has *really* believed it, it will touch every nerve of his being. It will often hold him back from one course and, with equal force, impel him to another. True faith is the most active motive power in the whole world! "Faith, which works by love," works all sorts of marvels, and where there is this true faith, it will prove its reality by its practicalness. The faith of God's elect is not a dead faith. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Neither is He the God of dead faith, but He is the God of living

faith. God grant that we may, each one of us, possess this real God-given blessing! But if we have merely a notional, nominal, historical faith which does not affect our lives at all, we are in the same condition as those who have no faith—and we come under the description of the text, "without faith"—and "without faith it is impossible to please God."

Before I enter upon the consideration of the text, I should like to make a sort of search through this place to find out any who are without faith. Without faith, you are without God, for God is only apprehended by faith. Without faith, you are without hope, for a true hope can only spring out of a true faith. And you are without Christ—consequently, without a Savior, without the means of the removal of your sin, without a help with which to daily fight the battle of life against sin. Without Christ? Oh, it were infinitely better to be without your eyes, without your hearing, without wealth, without bread, without garments, without a home rather than to be without the faith which brings everything that the soul requires! Without faith we are, indeed, spiritually naked, poor, miserable, lost and condemned—and without a hope of escape. "Without faith." Could that be written as a correct label and hung upon your back, you might not, perhaps, be ashamed to wear it. But if an angel can see it on your brow as the description of your character, I am sure that he is greatly concerned about you. But your brother man, who would gladly speak that you shall not leave this place without faith, feels troubled that there should be anyone in this land of Bibles, this land of Sabbaths, this land of revivals, this land of the Gospel who should have come to years of discretion and yet should be so dolefully indiscreet as to live "without faith."

The text says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." And I am going to keep to the text. So note, first, dear Friends, the *necessity of faith asserted.* After we have asserted it, we shall pass onto *the necessity of faith proven,* that you may see, each one with his own mental eye, that it must be so, that, "without faith it is impossible to please God." And then, we will close with *the necessity of faith used for profit*—we will try to gather some lessons from it for our own practical guidance.

I. First, then, here is THE NECESSITY OF FAITH ASSERTED—"Without faith it is impossible to please God."

You notice that there is no limit put to this assertion, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." *This Law applies universally to every person under the Gospel dispensation.* There are a great many people who are very anxious to know about the future of the heathen, but we may well leave them to the great Judge of All, earnestly desiring to bring them to the faith which is in Christ Jesus. It is much more practical for us to think of those to whom faith is *possible*, because the Gospel has come to them and they have heard it. The declaration of our text, "without faith it is impossible to please God," applies to every person, whoever that person may be! See how men are buried nowadays. A man has been a king, so, of course, he must be, "his most religious majesty." And though his soul, loaded with a thousand crimes, has sunk deep into the pit of woe,

yet there are many who suppose that it must be well with him because he was a king!

And if a man is a poet and can write fine verses, though they are steeped in lust, yet there are some who suppose that such a "cultured" person cannot be lost! "Surely," said a profane man once, "God will think twice before He damns such a gentleman as that." And what the skeptic spoke sarcastically is, no doubt, a common notion of many people, that if men happen to be in what are called the higher ranks of society, or happen to be largely gifted with a certain faculty, or happen to have been eminently successful in life, or to have been great inventors and so forth, it must be well with them! But be it known to one and all that "without faith it is impossible to please God."

"But," says someone, "men have been very sincere in the pursuit of external religion and they have been moral and amiable and benevolent—have not these pleased God?" It is not for me to use flattering speeches, for my text is very sweeping. "Without *faith* it is impossible to please God." He who has missed this faith has missed the vital point—had he begun with that, his amiability, his morality, his benevolence would had been acceptable, because in them there would have been the flower of life, the *faith* that makes them live! But without this, they are cold, soulless, dead, mere carcasses of virtue, devoid of life. "Without faith," in any case, and in *every* case, "it is impossible to please God."

And as the text is universal as to persons, so is it universal as to every form of work and worship. No matter what is done, "without faith it is impossible to please God." It was a fine row of alms houses that sprang out of that man's munificent bequest, but those alms houses never pleased God, for they were not built with any faith in him. It was a generous gift that was bestowed upon the church—yes, and those who received it were grateful for such help—but God never accepted it, for he who gave it hoped to buy pardon, thereby, or purchase a place in Heaven, or make some atonement for his oppressions of the poor. Without faith, though it were millions that were poured into the treasury of the church, "without faith, it is impossible to please God." I may say of faith what Paul said of love, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not faith, it profits me nothing." The most self-sacrificing and most heroic deeds, whenever they have been performed from any other motive than that of pleasing God and without confidence in God, have remained outside His acceptance.

"Without faith it is impossible to please God." This is not popular teaching, but we never wish to teach a popular theology. It is not one that will commend itself to the natural mind of men—we never thought it would—we would have been thunderstruck if our preaching had been admired by such persons! And we would have gone home and felt that we were not sent of God to preach at all. But, nevertheless, this is true, "without faith it is impossible to please God."

Observe that the text mentions two things. It says, "He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that dili-

gently seek Him." That is to say, in coming to God and in seeking out God, there must be *faith*. In coming to God, if there is prayer, what is that prayer worth which is offered without any faith in God? If a man prays to a God whom he does not know as really existing, is he not, even from his own point of view, engaged in a very senseless exercise? And to God, Himself, it must be a piece of dreadful mockery! O Sirs, there must be faith, or else prayer certainly becomes the most meaningless waste of time!

And as to praise, how can we praise an unknown God? If we have no faith that there is a God, how can we praise Him? How can our lives extol a Being about whose very existence we raise a question? No, more than that, I cannot praise God unless I know that He is *mine*. How can I bless another man's God? How can I offer to another man's God thanksgivings for mercies that I have never tasted and for favors in which I have never had a share? There must be a sense of *personal relationship* to God, personal obligation and personal confidence—and laying hold upon Him—or else in vain is the Psalm sung even to the noblest music!

And I believe, dear Friends, that if I come to God in the matter of preaching and bearing testimony, yet if I do it without faith, my work cannot be acceptable to God! I do not think that it would long be acceptable to you, either. To me, it would seem a *slavery* to have to preach what I did not believe! If I had a shadow of a doubt about it, I would hide myself until I had something to say about which I felt sure. How can we expect the blessing of God upon the testimony of His Son, even though it should be in the very words of Scripture and be doctrinally correct to a hair's breadth, unless faith is mixed with it by him who preaches it and by him who hears it? "Without faith" in any act whatever, however religious, devout and self-denying, "it is impossible to please God."

Further, dear Friends, notice that while the text is thus sweeping in its universality, it is also *very positive in its assertion.* It does not say, "Without faith it is *difficult* to please God," or, "Without faith it must require great monastic self-denial, rigid discipline, austerity and misery in order to please God." No, for those things do not please Him at all! It says, "Without faith *it is impossible* to please God." It does not, as I have sometimes seen it done in the country, put a five-barred gate across the road and paint on it the word, "Private." No, but it bricks the road right up, or it digs a gulf across this wrong road and says, *"It is impossible."* "Without faith it is impossible." Our Savior speaks of what is nearly impossible—the difficulty of a rich man entering the Kingdom of Heaven—and compares it to a camel going through the eye of a needle. And then He says, "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." But our text deals with something which is an *impossibility with God Himself*. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." It is a *double* impossibility—for an unbelieving man to please God and for God to be pleased with an unbelieving man. It is not possible that He should be pleased with works done in unbelief or with men abiding in unbelief!

Notice, also, that there is another strong word in the text, an imperative word—"for he that comes to God *must—must* believe." It is not, "He

that comes to God *should* believe and in proportion as he believes he will get a blessing, but if he is unbelieving he will only get a smaller blessing." No, but it is, "He that comes to God must." "Must" is the word of a king, or an emperor—it is an imperial Truth of God and an imperious Truth that—"he that comes to God" must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." We are sometimes styled dogmatic—is there any dogmatism that can be more intense than we have it in our text? It says, "impossible." It says, "must." These are words that are not to be bent and twisted! Some men have a great gift in wresting words and twisting expressions—they seem to bend them across their knee and snap their meaning in two—but this text does not go to be bent or snapped! "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that comes to God must believe."

Further, observe that the text not only makes this positive assertion, but it is intended to be *a message perpetually in force.* "Without faith it is impossible to please God," evidently refers to the past. Read the previous verse and you will see that it is so. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him." It was always so, under all that ancient dispensation—with those mighty Patriarchs, kings and Prophets—it was impossible to please God without faith! So is it now and so it always will be till time shall be no more. Still stands the immutable decree, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned"—that being the Gospel equivalent of this Apostolic declaration, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." It is always so, dear Friends, and it always will be so—there is no hope of any other gate ever being opened for those who refuse to enter the door of faith!

Yet once more, the text speaks *most instructively.* It tells us that there are certain things that really are and certain things which are imperative. "He that comes to God must believe that *He is."* If you would come to God, you must believe that there is a God and yes, must believe that God is what He says He is. Otherwise, if you make God to be other than He says He is, you make God to be an idol—your god is an imaginary being! You must accept God as He is revealed in Scripture. What He says He is, that He is! And what He is, you must believe, believing that He is, and that He is *God.* Oh, but how easy it is for a man to get away from that elementary Truth of God and to say, "Oh, yes, I believe in God!" But do you believe in inflexible justice? Do you believe in infinite mercy? Do you believe in an Omniscience that cannot fail to see? Do you believe in the Omnipresence that can never fail to be where you are? Do you believe all this? Because if not, you do not believe in God! You may believe in *your own idea of* God, but you do not really believe in God. If you would come to God, you must believe that He is what He says He is. In His Word, He reveals Himself as one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—will you accept His statements about Himself? Then, when you pray, will you cease delivering an oration to the air and speak into God's ear, believing that He

hears every word you utter, and more, that He is reading the thoughts that lie at the back of your words? That is the way to seek Him aright—to come to Him we must come to Him as the living God, having a real existence, a true personality—otherwise we cannot come to Him at all.

And, further, we must believe that "he is a rewarder of them that seek Him"—for that is the meaning of the Greek word. We must believe that God will reward the man who seeks Him and that, therefore, God is worth seeking! We must believe that although it may be costly to follow after God, and do His bidding, yet it will pay you—that there is a great reward in keeping His Commandments—that He does hear prayer, that He does grant great blessings to those who truly seek Him. We must believe this or else there is no real seeking of Him! It is imperative, if we would come to God, that we must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that seek Him.

God cannot reward them that seek Him on the ground of their merit, for they have none. It must, therefore, be upon the ground of Grace. This introduces into our faith, as a point of necessary belief, that we believe in Jesus Christ by whose merit we are accepted—that diligently seeking God, we find *Him in Christ*—and this brings to us the great Gospel reward. God bestows upon us His favor, His Grace and the blessings of His Covenant as a gracious reward, not because of *our* merit, but because of the merit of His Son, Jesus Christ! This we must believe, or we have not really come to God aright. That is the doctrine asserted in our text, "without faith it is impossible to please God."

II. Now I want to dwell for a few minutes upon THE NECESSITY of faith proven. What is the reason why there is such a necessity for faith in order to please God?

Our answer is, first, God has said so. Let it be enough that these are the Words of Inspiration, supported by many other similar Words throughout the sacred and Infallible Book. Here it stands—"Without faith it is impossible to please God." God says so. He knows what is the Truth. He can speak about what pleases Him and we are, therefore, not to doubt what He declares.

Still, as a confirmation of our faith, be it observed that *in the nature of things it must be so.* No man can be pleased with another who does not believe in him. If a person does not give you credit for uprightness and honesty, he may profess to do your will and wish to please you, but you feel at once that whatever he does, he misses the cardinal necessity for really pleasing you. Let a person have the conviction upon him that you are unkind and unjust. Let him feel that he could not trust you—well, I do not see how he can be a pleasing person to you, or how you are likely to get on with him in your household, whatever he may do! Distrust has divided men and women whose hearts seemed one—where trust has died out, love has always died out, too. And a more intolerable misery than for a man and woman who have no trust in one another, to be bound together, I can hardly conceive. In the very nature of things, if we are to be united with God by His Grace, one of the essential terms of the union must be, on our part, the fullest belief in God! I do not see how we can

ever hope to be on speaking terms with God, how we can run on the same lines with God, how we can at all be reconciled to God unless as a very preliminary step, we are resolved that we will believe God and that we will trust Him. "Without faith, it is," in the nature of things, "impossible to please God."

And, dear Friends, *the person who has no faith is unaccepted with God.* All through Scripture faith is spoken of as the great method of justification. We are justified by faith through Jesus Christ. If, then, I have no faith, I am not accounted just before God—and all the works of an unaccepted man must be unaccepted. If that man is an enemy to God, what matters it what he does, for how can he please God? You cannot expect that God should receive anything at your hands when you begin by declaring that you will not trust Him! It cannot be. However much you multiply your good works with a view of saving yourself and thereby pleasing God, you are distinctly aiming at a purpose which God has declared is not according to His mind. "By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." If, then, you persist in *working* with a view to salvation, you are pursuing a plan which God has declared He will never accept. You must come to Him as sinners to be justified by *another righteousness better than your own*, or else it will happen to you as happened unto ancient Israel. They had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge—and going about to establish themselves by their own righteousness, they did not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God. And hence they stumbled over that stone of stumbling and rock of offense—and were broken in pieces and perished! God save us from attempting to do what He says cannot be done! "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

Observe, further, that the man who is without faith in God *puts a gross slight upon God* and, therefore, cannot be pleasing to Him. He does, in effect, deny God's truthfulness. "He that believes not God has made Him a liar." So says John, the softest-speaking and most tender-hearted of all the Apostles. "He that believes not God has made Him a liar; because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son." Now, if a man begins by making God a liar, how can God be pleased with him?

Perhaps you say, "I do not doubt the truthfulness of God, but I question His power to fulfill His promise to such a sinner as I am." But, my Friend, do you not see that you have committed a gross insult against the Lord by such a statement? He claims to be Omnipotent! He asks, "Is there anything too hard for Me?" He says, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God and there is none else." Yet you *dare* to say that He cannot save you? You have insulted His power, how can you please Him?

"Oh, but," you say, "I—I have no doubt that God can keep His promise and that God will. But still, I cannot think that He could forgive such a sinner as I am." Now you have insulted His *goodness*. He is so good that you cannot suppose Him to be better? He is so ready to forgive that He swears with an oath that He has no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but that he turn unto Him and live! You must know that you dare

not mistrust the Truth, the Power, or the Goodness of God, or, if you do, then you cannot please Him! What would you think of a child who was always doubting his father saying, "Father said so-and-so, but I do not suppose it will come true. My father promised to give me such-and-such, but I do not expect that he will."

If a child stands up and says, "I find it hard work to believe my father—oh, dear, dear, dear—God save us from having such children as that! I do not see how they could possibly please us! They would be in a state of mind which would be radically displeasing because radically unjust and wrong! How dare you distrust your God! How dare you say that His testimony is not true! Let Him say what He will, here is one who is ready to believe Him. God grant that I may never doubt Him in the slightest degree! I feel that of all sins that I could ever commit against the Majesty of Heaven, one of the most heinous would be that of doubting one single syllable that comes from those Divine lips. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." He *must* keep His promise! There is no, "if," or, "but," about it! Otherwise, He would cease to be God—

"As well might He, His Being quit
As break His promise, or forget!"

He must be true.

"His very Word of Grace is strong
As that which built the skies.
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises"

and we must not dare to doubt anything that He says!

Brothers and Sisters, in a word, faith is so much the root, the source, the mother of every good, that he *who is without faith is without anything that can please God.* How shall I love Him in whom I do not believe? How can I be patient under the rod of Him whom I do not trust? How can I have zeal for Him whose veracity I doubt? How can I rejoice in Him whose promise I mistrust? No, this would lay the axe at the root of the fruit-bearing tree and utterly destroy it. "If you will not believe, neither shall you be established." There are no good works except those that spring from a living, loving, lasting faith in God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

III. Now, lastly, we are to consider THE NECESSITY OF FAITH USED FOR PROFIT. What are the lessons this Truth of God should teach us? When we have spoken of them, we have done, only may God bless our testimony to your hearts!

The first lesson is, I think, *let us look carefully to our faith.* Is it the faith of God's elect? Is it child-like faith? Is it really faith in God, or is it faith in our own knowledge, or our own judgment? Is it confidence in God's Word, or is it confidence in our own thoughts and inventions? I do not quarrel with modern theology merely because of what it teaches. I believe that it teaches a lie from top to bottom, but I have another quarrel with it, that it teaches a false principle. It takes man away from what is written to what is *thought*—it does not allow the Sovereign Authority of Revelation and in disallowing that, the very foundations are removed. And much of the abounding vice of this day is, I believe, the direct result

of this abounding unbelief of God, this philosophical mistrust of Infinite Wisdom! Is it philosophy? It is philosophy falsely so-called—mere madness put into some sort of shape. As for us, let us come "to the Law and to the Testimony," to God and to His Spirit, and test and try everything by what is here spoken and by our personal proving of it before God in our own experience, making that to be true to ourselves which God says is true to His chosen!

The next lesson I would give you is, *let us mix faith with all that we do.* "Without faith it is impossible to please God." So, dear Friend, you are going to teach in your Sunday school class next Lord's-Day. Well, then, teach with faith! Brother-minister, you are going to preach next Lord's-Day. Then say to yourself, "By God's Grace, I will try to preach in faith," because preaching in doubt does not come to much. You remember the story I have often told you, of my very first student going out to preach. He came to me and said that he had preached earnestly, several times, and yet he had not seen any conversions. I said to him, "And do you suppose that God is going to bless the people every time you choose to open your mouth?" He answered, "Oh, no, Sir! I don't expect that." "Ah, then," I replied, "*that* is why God did not bless you—because you had not faith in Him. You have confessed it!" I had caught him with guile. So, dear Brother, you *should* believe that if you preach the Gospel, God must bless you! That it is not a maybe or a mere possibility that He will, but that, if you deliver His message in the full conviction that somebody or other is going to get a blessing, there will be a blessing for someone! Very often, just in proportion to our faith, is it done unto us. Oh, how many churches there are that I know of where they hope that they may have some conversions and, dear souls, if they have two or three converts in a year, some of the old members are frightened at the quantity! They are afraid they cannot be all right because so many are coming in! If they were ever to hear a Brother preach so that 3,000 were converted at once, these dear old saints would rise up and say, "Now Peter, you are a regular revivalist sort of preacher! You are as bad as Moody and Sankey! Why, look at all these people brought in—we cannot possibly think of receiving so many into the church!" I am afraid that their god is a little god but, oh, to believe in a great God and to preach in faith! When everything is done in faith, it will be accepted.

A Sister says, "Oh, that my dear children were converted!" She does not at all expect that they will be—she is sure they will all grow up bad—and she is teaching them with a view to their turning back when they get to be 50 years old. Ah, my dear Friend, perhaps it will be so, but if you had faith and would believe that those dear children of yours need never go out into the world of sin at all, but by God's Grace might be brought to Him while they are yet at your knee, would not that be a great deal better? Without faith, you see, in bringing up your children, it will be impossible for you to please God by the way that you talk. Let us put plenty of faith into all we do! There is a good prescription in the Old Testament, you can look for it when you are at home—"Salt, without prescribing how much." That is, you may put as much of the salt of faith as ever you like

into all your work and you will never overdo it! But it is leaving the salt out that prevents it from being pleasing to God. Oh, for more true confidence in God who deserves to be confided in to the uttermost!

And, lastly, *let us take care to trust God most when the weather is worst.* There is a Brother here who is in a world of trouble. All his money is gradually melting away, he does not know how he is to make ends meet. Now, Brother, whatever you lose, say, "If I do not please anybody else, or do not please myself, I will please my Master." Walk with God, as Enoch did! How are you to do this? Listen—"without faith it is impossible to please God." You had not any room for faith about temporal things, once, they came in so regularly. Now there is an opportunity for you to exercise your faith—now you can trust in God—you now have elbow-room! Young fellows who enter the army or the navy rather like getting into a skirmish, or even a great battle. There is no chance of rising, they say, if there is no war. And you who enter Christ's service may justifiably say the same. If I have no troubles, where is room for my faith? How can I trust if I have nothing to trust about? You cannot swim, you know, when the water is only up to your ankles. You may go paddling about, but there can be no swimming. But plunge into deep water and then strike out like a man—*now* you will learn what faith is, when the last foot is off the ground—and you are just trusting in the eternal God. This will make a man of you! This will educate you for higher and grander doings in times to come! It will make you more fit to sing the song of angels before the eternal Throne of God!

I remember, before I came to London, a man praying a very extraordinary prayer for me. I did not understand it at the time and I hardly think that he ought to have prayed it in public in that shape. He prayed that I might be able to swallow bundles of twigs cross-ways. It was a very strange prayer, but I have many a time done just what he asked that I might, and it has cleared my throat wonderfully! And there is many a man who cannot now speak out for God who will be obliged to have some of those bundles thrust down his throat, yet. And when those great troubles come and he is obliged to swallow them, then he will grow to be a man in Christ Jesus!

Thus have I tried, as well as I can, to show you God's remedy for sin's malady. And although I always feel as if this talking about faith in Christ was saying the same thing over and over again, yet we must keep to this one theme. You know that when men tell us that they have fifty cures for a disease, we shake our heads and say, "Is there one specific? Because, if you will give me one thing that will cure me, you may keep the other 49 if you please." So is it with the Gospel of the Grace of God. According to what some say, there are a great *many* ways of being saved—but is there one *sure* way? Because, if there is, you may, if you will, have the doubtful ones—I will be content with the one that is not doubtful! I like that cry of the monk who had, somehow or other, found out the Gospel even in his cell—when his mind could not get consolation from extreme unction, and from all the paraphernalia of the Roman church, he was heard to cry, "Tua vulnera, Jesu! Tua vulnera, Jesu!"—"Your wounds, Jesus! Your

wounds, Jesus!" With that cry upon his lips and that doctrine in his heart, he could die in peace—and he could find comfort nowhere else!

Someone has contemptuously said that this is the Gospel for old women and children. Well, I am quite willing to be classed with them in this matter, for it exactly suits me. Somebody wrote to me, the other day, to say that he had met with some Negroes who had read and enjoyed my sermons. And he evidently thought it was no compliment to me when he added, "I should think that uneducated black people are just the sort that you are fit to preach to." I felt so glad to have such a compliment as that! I like to preach to uneducated black people, because, if the Gospel can save them, it can also save the white-faced people who are so wonderfully well-instructed! Is it not still true, that often, simple souls find their way to Heaven while others are fumbling for the latch? But whatever men say or do not say, this is the Truth of God, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Get away from all trust in yourself! You are full of sin and you will never find any remedy in the disease. Go your way to Christ and to none but Christ, for in Him and in Him, alone, is salvation provided for you!

Human nature's way of salvation is, "Do, do, do!" God's way of salvation is, "Done, done! It is all done!" You have but to rely by faith upon the Atonement which Christ accomplished on the Cross. You have but to accept God's way of salvation and then Christ has saved you—and you may go in peace and rejoice forever. The Lord will give Grace to that man who looks to Christ upon the Cross and trusts alone in Him. There are hundreds of us here who can, at this moment, say," He is all my salvation and all my desire." The great Searcher of hearts knows that we have not a shadow of a shade of confidence anywhere but in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, and who rose again and ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high. I am sure it is so and it may be so with you, also, dear Friends!

A good man was once explaining to a poor humble Christian that in that precious text, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," there are five negatives. He said, "The Lord seems to say, five times over, 'I will not, not, not, leave you. I will never, never forsake you.' There," said the learned Divine, "is not that delightful, to find God saying that five times over?" "Yes," said the listener, "so it is. But I would have believed it if He had only said it once." What a blessed thing it is to have a faith that takes God at His first Word and does not need Him to say it over five times, but is perfectly satisfied that what He has promised He is able to perform! And what He is able to perform He will perform to the praise and glory of His Grace wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved!

Is not this a sensible course which I am commending to you? Is not this a reasonable thing to say to a rational man? One might have supposed that if men once believed the Bible to be God's Word, and Jesus Christ to be God's atoning Sacrifice, they would be eager to have Christ as their Savior. But it is not so. And often, as I preach, I am driven back to this conclusion at which I arrived long ago—It is not *your* power, Sir Preacher, that can save men. You may preach and argue, and reason as

best you can, but until the arm of the Lord is revealed, and the Power of the Holy Spirit sends home the argument, that which is a mere matter of argument would be irresistible to a *rational* man, yet, as a spiritual force, fails to have any influence over the carnal mind. It is not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord that the work of salvation is accomplished! O Spirit of the living God, send home the Truth of God by Your own almighty Power, for Jesus' sake!

I have heard of a doctor who was somewhat severe in his method of treating his patients, but he healed a great many persons. A man who had a bad leg came to him. "Well," said the doctor, "I will adopt such-and-such a course with that leg, and I will restore the use of it to you, so that you shall go away from this place perfectly whole." He told the patient what he was going to do, but the man said, "No! I could not bear to have that done, I shall have to go to someone else." "Just so," said the doctor, "you are not bad enough for me to cure you, yet. When you get bad enough for me, you will come back and say, 'Do what you like with me, Doctor, so long as you guarantee my restoration.'" There is many a soul that is not, in this sense, bad enough for Christ yet. That is to say, he thinks himself still too good to be saved in Christ's way! I have heard of a swimmer who went to rescue a man who was drowning. The man was sinking and the spectators wondered why he did not strike out at once and lay hold of the man. He swam near him, but kept clear of him, and let him go down a second time and, after that, he swam to him and brought him out.

Someone asked him, "Why did you let the man sink?" He answered, "He was too strong for me to rescue him at the first. While he was strong, he would have pulled me down with himself, so I let him begin to sink and lose all strength—and then I knew that I could get him ashore." In like manner, some of you will have to go down again a second time before you get weak enough to be saved. It is not your strength, it is your weakness! It is not your righteousness, it is your *sin* that qualifies you for Christ! I mean this—that just as poverty is the best qualification for alms, as misery is the best qualification for mercy—so, the lower you are lying before Christ's Cross, the more sure may you be that the Grace of God will come to you as soon as you trust in Christ's atoning work!

May God bless you all with this faith which pleases Him, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

SERVUS SERVORUM
NO. 2514

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 25, 1897.
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"I am among you as He that serves."
Luke 22:27.

OBSERVE, dear Friends, that our Lord, in order to impress a great practical Truth of God upon His 12 Apostles, refers them to Himself. He very often does so, quoting His own doings as an example to His servants. Does not this fact give us a hint that there is someone greater than a man here, for no mere man, modest and true and right-minded, would continually make himself the object of imitation! We would not consider it right if we found Abraham, or Moses, or David constantly pointing to himself as an example. Such a course is very proper for certain persons in certain special cases as, for instance, Paul might occasionally allude to himself when he was addressing his own converts, but even then rarely doing it—and doing it with extreme diffidence. But our Lord acts thus very often and with the utmost possible naturalness! Neither did it ever suggest itself to anyone of His people that there was anything immodest in His doing so. Such an idea never occurred to us because we have always recognized in Him something which entitled Him to speak thus, something which rendered it quite right that He should so speak. He is Master and Lord! He is very God of very God! He is perfect! He is out of the lists of ordinary men, He rises like a lone Alp above us all and when He speaks as He does in the words before us, the very fact that He does speak without our feeling any objection thereto proves that there is a something altogether unique about His Character, and that something, I believe, is the existence of perfection, and the evidence of Deity combined with His Humanity.

At any rate, dear Brothers and Sisters, this is a matter of fact in our holy faith, that the best lesson for a Christian to learn is to be learned from Christ, Himself. I am afraid that in these days some are preaching in a lop-sided way. Years ago Christ was set forth almost exclusively as an example. "Concerning the Imitation of Christ" was the great matter of public discourse—and many books were written upon that important theme. But, inasmuch as in those days they forgot and undervalued the *Sacrifice* of Christ and did not preach Justification by faith in His precious blood, their preaching was but dim and inefficient and Christ was not largely imitated, after all, although men were bid to imitate Him. Now, we preach His sacrifice—in many of our places of worship the Atonement of Christ is very clearly proclaimed and the plan of salvation by virtue of His precious blood is very widely declared with more or less

of clearness, for which I thank God. But we must take care that we do not forget that Christ is our Example as well as our Atonement—and that, while by His death we live, the life which we live is to be conformed to the life of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. He did not merely come to save us from the guilt of sin, but He came to save us from the *power* of sin. He does not merely bring us pardon, but He brings us *holiness* and He comes to make us like Himself. This, indeed, is the end of His life and of His death—that we might grow into His image and become truly replicas—repetitions of Christ according to our degree, among the sons of men.

I want, therefore, to say to you who are Christ's people—As He has saved you, follow Him! If you are washed in His blood, be like He! If, indeed, He is your Master and Lord, obey Him! In all that you do, ask yourselves this question, "What would Christ have done under these circumstances?" And then act according to the answer which God's Word and your own conscience give you. "As He is, so are we, also, in this world." And if we fulfill our destiny to the glory of God and the honor of our Redeemer, we shall make men see in our own proper persons what Christ was when He was here—"holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." Christ always points us to Himself. If He bids us trust Him, He also bids us follow Him. If He bids us hope in Him, He also bids us obey Him and be like He is. And they who will not have His holiness shall not have His Atonement! If we do not care to be like He is, we cannot be saved by Him.

The particular evil at which our Lord aimed when He uttered the words of our text was the evil which is so common in the Church, even down to the present day, that is, each man seeking to be somebody. We are all born *great* the first time—it is only when we are born the second time, born from above—that we come to be little. When we were born the first time, we were so great that we were really nothing—but when we are born a second time, we are so little that we are everything in Christ! At first, self seeks to gain the mastery. It has a head that must wear the crown and feet that must be shod with silver slippers. Self will wear no sackcloth, it must be clad in silk at the very least. Self always exalts itself above all its fellows—it even pines after the Throne of God, for self has the ambition of Lucifer and will never be satisfied, however high it mounts. Now, our Savior wants, in His disciples, that self should be crushed, that all desire to be great should be quenched and that, instead of all of us wanting to be masters, we should see which of us can be servants! If we are as Christ was, we shall catch the spirit which made Him say, "I am among you as He that serves."

I. To that point I bend all my strength just now and, first, I want to speak a little upon our Lord's position among His own followers—"I am among you as He that serves."

The 12 Apostles came together to the Last Supper. There was usually a servant or slave in the room to wash the feet of the guests, but there does not appear to have been such a person on that occasion. Peter did not offer. Even John did not think of it. Thomas was probably considering who ought to do it and Philip, the arithmetician of the Apostles, was

calculating how much water it might take—but nobody offered to do it. Everybody's business, you know, is nobody's business, so nobody offered to wash anybody's feet. They had already taken their positions, reclining about the table when, without any suggestion from anybody else, the Master Himself rose from their midst, laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself with it, poured water into a basin and went from one to another—and washed their feet. After He had done that, and was again reclining with them, He said to them, in effect, "I am among you as the slave, the domestic who does the most menial work. You see that I am." They could not contradict it, for He had actually and literally taken that position among them.

But, dear Friends, this act of our Lord's was no novelty! What He did *literally* that evening, He had been doing ever since they had formed a community! *He was always the servant of them all.* He was constantly looking out for their interests and laying Himself out to do them good. They did not come to Him to bring Him anything—they came to *receive* from Him. They did not come to teach Him, or even to comfort Him with their company. They all came for what they could *get* from Him and to learn the Truth of God from His lips, some of them hoping to be led by Him to a kingdom which they did but dimly understand, but they were all, as it were, sitting at a table all the time they were with Him, being fed with heavenly and spiritual food. And He was all the while their servant, washing their feet, bearing with their ill manners, sweetly correcting their mistakes and always patient, notwithstanding their slowness of learning. He could truly say, not only of that supper night, but of His whole life, "I am among you as He that serves."

When Christ thus spoke, He called Himself not merely a servant, one that serves, but specially *the* servant—the deacon, the attendant, is really the word. "I am among you as the waiter. You are the gentlemen who sit at the table and I am the servant who waits upon you." Our Lord meant to remind the Apostles by this act that He had always taken among them the very lowest place. He had never exercised any sort of domineering authority over them, He had never been exacting in His demands upon them. He had never sought His own comfort at their expense, but He was always meek and lowly in heart—always seeking their welfare rather than His own. There was not one of them but knew that this was true. He was less than the least among them, although He was greatest of them all! As the old writers used to say, He was *servus servorum,* the Servant of servants.

A servant, you know, is one who has to care for other people. When she gets up in the morning, it is not her work to look to her own comfort. The true servant in the house glides along quietly, watching to see what can be done for the comfort of all the inhabitants. Such a person forgets herself, or himself, in thinking of others. This is just what our Lord Jesus did—He never seems to have given Himself a thought, He was only thinking of the poor multitudes that gathered about Him and of the sick folk that He could heal and of the humble few that came into His more intimate acquaintance, and called Him Lord and Master. Wonderfully unsel-

fish was He whose whole care was for others and who could truly say to His disciples, "I am among you as He that serves."

A true servant ignores his own will. He does not do what he would like to do—he does what his master tells him to do. He is engaged as a servant and he lives as a servant. And he obeys the will of him who has employed him. Was it not just so with our Lord in the whole course of His life? "I came not," He said, "to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." From His childhood, He must be about His Father's business and, until His last hour, when He could say to His Father, "It is finished," He never had two businesses in hand. His one sole concern was to take upon Himself the form of a servant, to become obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Beloved, I cannot imagine a better picture of a servant than the full length portrait of Him who is truly Lord of All! "King of kings" is a title full of majesty, but "Servant of servants" is the name which our Lord preferred when He was here below!

A servant is one who bears patiently all manner of hardness. Many servants have had to endure a great deal of hardship and, sometimes, much misjudgment and harshness. But this blessed Servant of the Father bore cold, nakedness, hunger and even death in His servitude. And though He was despised and rejected by the very men whose good He sought. Though He was maltreated, maligned and slandered, yet He still never turned aside. even for self-defense. He held on in His holy and sacred course as Servant of all. I do not know how to put this Truth of God as I would like to, but I want you to recognize that He, who this day sits on the highest Throne in Glory amid a hierarchy of angels, adored of blood-redeemed spirits, was among us here below as the Servant of His own servants! Your Blessed Lord, whose face outshines the sun at noonday, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, who is this day Head over all things to His Church—your Lord, who shall shortly come with myriads of saints and angels to judge the world in righteousness, was, when He was here, nothing more than this—"He that serves." That was His position.

II. I have entrenched upon what I meant to make the second subject of discourse, namely, THE WONDER OF THIS POSITION, for it is among the greatest of all wonders that Jesus, the Lord of All, should have become the Servant of All!

Very briefly let me suggest to your minds that the marvel was all the greater as *He was Lord of All by nature and essence.* Our Lord Jesus was Divine. He was "God over all, blessed forever," "Son of the Highest," that Eternal Word, without whom was not anything made that was made. Yet to His disciples He says, "I am among you as He that serves." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "And 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." Truly, it was a marvelous condescension on our Lord's part!

Remember, too, that *He was infinitely wise*. There was never another teacher like Christ, for He could answer every question and solve every difficulty. Those piercing eyes of His looked through every secret place and revealed the darkest mysteries of human life. Then, surely, they set

Him on high in the church of His day, they made Him professor, they paid Him every homage! But, did they? No. He said, "Though I am Rabboni, the Great Master, yet I am among you as He that serves." Is this how you treat your wise men, O you gracious ones? Do you set them to wash the disciples' feet?

Recollect, also, that *He was immaculately pure and incomparably good*. There was never such another Man among all the sons of men! There can never be another Character so charming as His. All perfections meet in Him to make up one perfection! All the sweets of the highest morality and spirituality are blended in Him to make one perfect and essential sweet! Yet He is among us as the *One that serves*. There was a certain preacher who cried out in his sermon, "O virtue, if you were once embodied, and should come down among mankind, all men would worship you!" But see, here *is* Virtue perfected and Incarnate—and down among us serving as a Servant! This is how man treats the Perfect One—and it is a great wonder.

Besides that, *the Lord was our superlative Benefactor*. He was here simply to bless us. Eyes, lips, hands, feet—all scattered benedictions. He was a sun in the midst of human darkness. His every thought was a beam of light and comfort for mankind. Yet He could say, "I am among you as He that serves." In order to be our Benefactor, He takes the very lowest place and men were content to keep Him there and let Him wash their feet. Oh, 'tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis amazing, yet true!

It is amazing, too, that He should be a *servant among such poor creatures as they were*. I have heard of some who have been willing to wash the feet of saintly men, but these disciples were a band of poor sinners. I have heard of some who would have been willing to perform menial offices for great philosophers, or men of high dignity. But these disciples were mainly a company of Galilean fishermen who had lately left their boats and nets, or peasants fresh from the soil of their fields full of all the faults and infirmities natural to men of their class. Yet our blessed Lord said to them, "I am among you—you fishermen, you countrymen, you poverty-stricken men—I am among you as He that serves." O gracious Master, You were humble, indeed, and it did well become You! You seem, despite Your ineffable Glory, to be quite at home when You are acting as slave to Peter and James and John, taking their soiled feet into Your pure hands and washing them clean.

III. Now, in the third place, let us inquire what is the explanation of this wonder? Why did our Lord Jesus Christ, when He was among the twelve, take the place of Him that serves? Why did He, who was Lord of All, become Servant of All?

First, *because He was so truly great.* The little man is always jealous lest he should be treated as little. The little selfish being tries to wriggle himself into notice somehow or other. He needs to be observed and then he wants to do something for which he may have a vote of thanks—and he would like it to be proposed in very special terms. Do you expect *him* to wash any men's feet? Well, he might wash the feet of *gentlemen*, in a golden basin, with a crystal basin, rose water, and a damask napkin. Oh, yes, my lord would do it that way very prettily and think a great deal of

his condescension! But actually to take the feet of poor men into his hands and to wash them—to really do some such service to those who need it—he could not manage that! He is so little that he could not rise to such a dignified position. Brothers and Sisters, it was because our Lord was so superlatively great that He could do little things, that He could stoop and be lowly. It is in the nature of such a great heart as His to be willing to do any necessary thing for those whom it loves.

But the second answer to the question is this. Our Lord was among men as One that serves *because He had such immeasurable love.* Love is always happiest when it can do something for its object. It is no toil for love to labor for that which it loves—it would be slavery to it to be withheld from so delicious an exercise! Look at the mother with her child—even with all the many trials she has with it—it is so dear that she counts it a relaxation rather than a bondage to take care of her own beloved offspring! And have you never known a loving woman sit by the bedside of her sick husband? The nights have been long and dreary but she has not left him whose life was ebbing away. The candle has burnt low and the daylight has peeped in through the blinds, but there she is—still sitting—and unless she verily faints away through sheer exhaustion, you cannot get her from that sick room, for love holds her there and keeps those weary eyelids from dropping down and makes her feel it to be a sad joy, a grief but a pleasure to be near him whom she loves.

And our blessed Lord was so full of love to us that nothing seemed a stoop to Him. "For the joy that was set before Him," the joy of blessing His people, "He endured the Cross, despising the shame." "Will I wash their feet?" He seemed to say, "that is very little. I will wash them altogether in my heart's blood. I will bear their sins in My own body on the tree and will be, indeed, among them as He that serves to the fullness of a sacred service such as never was exhibited before or since." It was love, it was wondrous love, excessive love, that would not let Him stay in Heaven amid the splendors of His royalty, but made Him come to earth, amid the sorry surroundings of penury and grief, that He might save us!

IV. Now, lastly, I am coming to what I have been driving at all the while and that is, THE IMITATION OF OUR LORD'S HUMILITY. I suggest to you at once the power by which you shall learn to imitate your Lord. If you get His love in your hearts, you will always long and wish to take up a position like His and be among your fellow Christians as one that serves.

If we are to imitate Christ, it will involve, dear Friends, that we who are saved by Him should *joyfully undertake the very lowest service.* If there is a door to be kept, if there is a path to be swept, let us aspire to that dignity. If there is a class of men more degraded than another, let us wish to go to them. If there is a rank of women more fallen than another, let us pray and labor especially for them. If there are any members of the Church that are more neglected and despised than others, let us be most attentive to them. If there is somebody who really is quite a worry when we visit her, let us visit her. If there is a person who really is so exceedingly poor and, perhaps, so very dirty that it takes a good deal of self-denial to go and sit by her bedside when she is sick, let us go. If we are

to be like Christ, we shall all be eager for the lowest work, we shall all be seeking who can take the lowest place. If you want this pulpit, dear Friends, you can have it if you can fill the position better than I do. But then, perhaps, you might not! But there will not be much competition for the *lowest* place. If you become a candidate for that position, you will get it. There are not likely to be too many applicants for the post and, by degrees, one and another will edge out, so I recommend you, if you really want the place that Christ would have you take, that is, *the very lowest position in the Church of God*, to go in for it, for you will get it.

You have all heard of David Brainerd, the great missionary to the Red Indians. He was seen, one day, lying in his hut, teaching a little Red Indian child to say, "a, b, c." Somebody said, "What? Is this David Brainerd teaching that little dunce his letters?" "Yes," he said, "I have prayed God that, as long as I live, I might be useful. And now I am too weak to preach, I am too feeble to do anything else but just teach this little child the alphabet. And I shall keep on doing something for my Master till I die." So, dear Friend, if you cannot teach the thousands, teach two or three! If you could not even venture on two or three, yet teach your own child, or look after somebody else's child, some gutter child, some Arab of the street! Be as your Master would have you be, "as he that serves," by seeking to fill the very lowest office in His Church.

Show the same spirit, also, in being *at all times lowly in your esteem of yourself*. You know the gentleman who is always being insulted, I know him very well, indeed—you could not wink an eye at him but you would insult him! He has a very thin skin—you must mind how you *think* when you are near him—he is always being treated in a disrespectful manner. Nobody ever seems to treat him as he ought to be treated in the place where he now is. If he were to get among people of greater sense and better education, he says that there he should be respected. I almost wish he would go—still, I must not say so, because, perhaps, we can mend him if we let him stay and all of us seek to do him good. But, Brothers and Sisters, do not any of you be of that character, but be among those sensible persons of whom a disrespectful thing could not be said because they would not treat it as disrespectful!

Some time ago a man said a very unkind and untrue thing of me, and I felt quite pleased because I thought that if he had known me better, he might have said something worse. But I was quite satisfied to take the bad thing as it was. I never told anybody about it and I do not intend to, for it really did not trouble me at all. As far as I remember, I slept as long that night as I had done before. There is no use in believing that you are such an important person that the wind must not blow on you, because the wind *will* blow on you! Do you not find it so? Well, suppose that we do not have any dignity. Suppose that we, each one, say, "I am among you as he that serves. Now, then, find as much fault as you please." In wet weather, one of the most useful things in a house is the doormat—and a doormat never complains of persons wiping their boots on it—because it was put there for that very purpose. And if you are quite willing to let people wipe their dirty boots on you, you will come to feel, "What a capital man I am! How beautifully that man cleaned his boots on

me just now! He found great fault with me, but he was not finding fault with somebody else just then. It did not hurt me and it might have hurt somebody else, so I am doing good service in bearing what, after all, does not so much offend me now I have brought my mind to it." So, have a lowly estimate of yourself, for then you will be like Christ, who said, "I am among you as He that serves."

Furthermore, Brothers and Sisters, may I earnestly inculcate upon Christians that we should *always be seeking to do good to others,* for that is what Christ meant. He made His disciples recline at the table, but He waited on them. It was His high office to be the lowest among them! Now, Christian people, look out for opportunities of doing good to others. "I do not know," says one, "that I get much good out of the Church." But that is not the point! The question for you to ask is, "How much good have I done to the Church?" for, after all, our being here is not with a view of getting so much out of it, but putting so much into it. The Christian man's way of living is by giving, for he realizes that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

If you really want to serve somebody, there is a wide field open to you. You need not go to Africa to do it. You can stay in your own house and serve somebody there. It seems to me that a Christian should be trying from morning to night what he can do to bless other people for their good. It should be the mother's ambition to make the children happy and to train them for Christ. It should be the father's wish that all under his care in the house should enjoy being at home and should think that there never was such a home as he makes. It should be the girl's wish that brothers and sisters at home should be glad to think that Mary is there, for she is quite a light in the house. And the brother should make it his joy to do everything that can minister to the comfort of his mother and sisters. In fact, this is the point wherein Christians would carry Christianity on to a greater triumph—if they, each one, sought the good of others.

But some are so grumpy, so snappy, that they cannot do even a good thing without doing it badly! If they do you a favor, you feel that it is just the same as if they had offended you. Let it not be so with us, dear Friends! Let us seek to exhibit an amiable, gracious, loving spirit—not by pretending to have it—but by *really* loving others and desiring their present, their future and their eternal welfare. This is what Jesus did when He said, "I am among you as He that serves." Let us do the same as far as in us lies. In a word, dear Brothers and Sisters, let us imitate our Lord Jesus Christ in being willing to bear and forbear even to the end. The true Christian is the man or woman who, when he is reviled, reviles not again—when he is falsely accused, scarcely thinks it worth his while to answer—who often foregoes his rights—and is willing to do so. He or she is one who is not for self, not even for justice to himself, but is willing to bear and suffer wrong rather than inflict wrong.

Someone, perhaps, says that I am teaching you hard lessons. Yes, but if you are the children of the Lord Jesus Christ, this is the kind of lesson that you will love and try to practice! And as you become proficient in it, there will be a peculiar sweetness stealing into your spirit. I pray God

that we may have the mind of Christ, that we "may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." If any treat you ill, love them all the more! If they make you angry, try to get over it as quickly as possible. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Pay them off the next day by doing them some kindness which you would not have done if they had not treated you badly. Always try to speak as well of everybody as you can. When you hear anything against them, cut it in halves—and cut each half into two more halves—and then throw all away as if you had never heard it! Go through the world with the full conviction that there are some good people in it and that if there are not, it is time that *you* should be one and should help to increase the number by exhibiting a holy, humble, gentle, gracious spirit. If you have this mind in you, your Lord will be glorified and men will say, "Is this a Christian? Then let me be a Christian, too!"

God help you to do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *LUKE 22:1-39.*

Verses 1, 2. *Now the feast of unleavened bread drew near, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and scroll sought how they might kill Him; for they feared the people.* Dastardly fear often drives men to the greatest crimes. He who is not brave enough to be master of his own spirit and to follow the dictates of his own conscience may do, before long, he little knows what. Because of the fear of the people, the chief priests and scribes were driven to compass the death of Christ by craft and to bring Him to His death by the cruel betrayal of Judas, one of His own Apostles.

3-6. *Then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray Him unto them in the absence of the multitude.* Was it not a sad thing that the betrayer of Christ should be one of the twelve? Yet deeply trying as it must have been to the heart of Christ, there is something useful about even that horrible transaction! It says to all the professing Church of Christ, and it says to us who claim to be Christ's followers, "Do not think yourselves safe because you are in the visible Church. Do not imagine that even holding the highest office in the Church can prevent you from committing the basest crime. No, for here is one of the twelve Apostles, yet he betrays his Master!

Sometimes we have found this betrayal to be a source of comfort. I have myself desired, in receiving members into the Church, to be very careful, if possible, only to receive good men and true. Yet, though pastors and elders of the Church may exercise the strictest watch, some of the worst of men will manage to get in. When that is the case, we say to ourselves, "No new thing has happened to us, for such a sinner as this marred the Church from the very beginning." Here is Judas, when Christ, Himself, is the Pastor, when the twelve Apostles make up the

main body of the Church. Here is Judas, one of the twelve, ready to betray his Master for the paltry bribe of 30 pieces of silver—the price of a slave. Yes, we might have been put out of heart in building up the Church of God if it had not been for this sad but true narrative concerning Judas and his betrayal of our Lord.

7, 8. *Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat.* Notice how carefully our Lord respected the ordinances of that dispensation so long as it lasted. The Passover was an essential rite of the Jewish faith and our Lord, therefore, duly observed it. Learn here, dear Brothers and Sisters, to esteem very highly the ordinances of God's House! Let Baptism and the Lord's Supper keep their proper places. You do them serious injury if you lift them out of their right places and try to make *saving* ordinances of them. But, in avoiding that evil, do not fall into the opposite error of neglecting them! What Christ has ordained, it is for His people to maintain with care until He comes again. And if He kept the Passover even when, in Himself, it was already on the point of being fulfilled, let us keep up the ordinances which He has enjoined upon us. If any of you have neglected either of them, let me remind you of His gracious words, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness," and, "This do you, in remembrance of Me."

9-13. *And they said unto Him, Where do You want us to prepare? And He said unto them, Behold, when you are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he enters in. And you shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master says unto you, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready. And they went, and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover.* Observe in this passage an amazing blending of the human and the Divine! No mention is made of either as a matter of doctrine, but incidentally our Lord's Divinity and Humanity are most fully taught. Here is Christ so poor that He has not a room in which to celebrate the most necessary feast of His religion. He has made Himself of no reputation and He has no chamber which He can call His own. Yet see the Godhead in Him! He sends His messengers to a certain house and tells them to say to the good man of the house, "Where is the guest chamber?" It all turns out just as He said it would be and He is welcomed to this man's best room and to the furniture thereof. Jesus speaks here as did His Father when He said to Israel in the olden time, "Every beast of the forest is Mine and the cattle upon a thousand hills." All the guest chambers in Jerusalem were really at Christ's disposal—He had but to ask for them and there they were—all ready for Him! Here we see the majesty of His Deity but, inasmuch as He had no room that He could call His own, we also see the humility of His Manhood.

14-16. *And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him. And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.* This was to be His last meal with His disciples before He died. And He had looked for-

ward to it with great desire. It was a most solemn occasion and yet to Him a most desirable one. May something of the Master's desire overflow into your hearts, Beloved, whenever you are about to partake of the sacred feast which He instituted that night!

17-20. *And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the Kingdom of God shall come. And He took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you.* Do you see how this new memorial was blended with the Passover, how it melted into that social meal which formed part of the paschal celebration? There was a cup, then bread, and then the cup after supper, so there was a gracious melting of the one dispensation into the other. We see our Lord's wisdom in thus leading His children on from step to step, without a break, conducting them from one line of service to another and a still higher one.

21. *But, behold, the hand of him that betrays Me is with Me on the table.* This was a sad and solemn fact, yet it has often been so since that night. The nearer to Christ, the farther from Him—so has it sometimes happened since. He who was, in some respects, the highest in the College of the Apostles became the lowest in the ranks of the children of perdition.

2, 23. *And truly the Son of Man goes, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed! And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.* Let us also pass that question round among ourselves—

"When any turn from Zion's way,
(Alas, what numbers do)!
Methinks I hear my Savior say,
'Will you forsake Me, too?'
Ah, Lord, with such a heart as mine,
Unless You hold me fast,
I feel I must, I shall decline,
And prove like them at last.
The help of men and angels joined
Could never reach my case
Nor can I hope relief to find
But in Your boundless Grace.
What anguish has that question stirred,
If I will also go?
Yet, Lord, relying on Your Word,
I humbly answer, No."

God grant us more Grace, that we may be held fast by the records of love!

24. *And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.* Let me read you these two verses together. They strike me as being very remarkable. Here are two questions—"They began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing," that is, betray their Lord. "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." What poor crea-

tures we are! How we are tossed with contrary winds! The new question comes up and yet the old question, which ought to have been smothered by it, still remains there! It is possible that Luke is here alluding to some dispute which the Apostles had previously had and now the Lord, remembering that even in the ashes of contention lived the fires of ambition, would quench the last sparks of the evil fire.

25. *And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.* The people are compelled to use sweet terms to express a very bitter bondage, so they call their tyrants, "benefactors."

26, 27. *But you shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that does serve. For which is greater, he that sits at meat, or he that serves?* The guest, or the waiter at the table?

27-31. *Is not he that sits at meat? But I am among you as He that serves. You are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed unto Me; that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.* As our Lord Jesus looked upon His eleven Apostles, He felt that their time of greatest trial was fast approaching. Beyond anything they had ever endured before, they were now to be put into the devil's sieve and Satan would toss them to and fro, and seek, if possible, to destroy them!

32. *But I have prayed for you, that your faith fails not.*—"I have made you, Simon, a special object of My prayer. All the brotherhood will be tried, but for you I have especially prayed, for you, who seem to be the strongest, are the weakest of them all, so I have prayed specially for you, that your faith fails not."

32. *And when you are converted*—"When you are restored"—

32-39. *Strengthen your brethren. And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with You, both into prison, and to death. And He said, I tell you, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that you shall thrice deny that you know Me. And He said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked you anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip, and he that has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning Me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough. And He came out, and went, as He was accustomed, to the Mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him.*

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

SOMETHING WORTH SEEKING
NO. 2515

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"But seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
Matthew 6:33.

THERE is just as much need of this exhortation today as there was when our Savior first uttered it. These are times in which fretful care is very apt to enter into the hearts of Believers and if our Lord were here in Person, now, He would admonish us to be rid of such care, for fretful care is not becoming in a child of God. It is so opposed to faith and to the life of God in the soul, that it ought to be struggled with and driven out. None of us who are trusting in Christ ought to allow ourselves to become the victims of it.

Fretful care is altogether unnecessary in a Believer. Our Lord says, in this very chapter, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they?" "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Therefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" If, therefore, God will do it, why should you worry about it? If you saw a farmer feeding his barn-door fowls plentifully, you would not believe a slanderer who said that the man starved his children—and as long as you see God providing for the baser creatures, and even the wild beasts that He has formed, rest assured that He will take care of His children! Therefore fretful care is unnecessary.

And, further, it is useless. Even if you feel yourself bound to fret, of what possible service will all your fretting be? Would the fowls of the Heaven be better fed if they sullenly moped on the boughs in winter time, or if they croaked and cried out against the God who created them? And if you begin croaking, what will you gain by it? Can you, by complaining, add a cubit, or even an inch, to your stature? If there is no rain, will the fretfulness of the farmer compel the clouds to come and empty themselves on his meadows? If the husbandman should fancy that it is raining too much, will his grumbling seal up the bottles of Heaven? If your trade is dull, will it be made any brisker by your murmuring? If your business yields you no profit, will you get any profit out of your complaints? This worrying is a poor business—it cannot bring any good results. Carking care, therefore, is as useless as it is unnecessary.

Our Savior dissuades us from it by a third argument. He says that it is heathenish. "After all these things do the Gentiles seek." We need not wonder if those who have no knowledge of God, no Savior, no Father in Heaven, should try to get all they can out of this world, for they have no other! Well may they make gold their god, for they have no God who can give them any pleasure or delight. But it should not be so with you who are the twice-born, the immortal, the God-descended. You who have eternal life within you, you in whose bodies the Holy Spirit is dwelling as in a temple—and it is so with you unless you are hypocrites and are making a pretense to that which is not true—you should not be fretting and stewing about what you shall eat, or what you shall drink and how you shall be clothed! Endowed with such a noble nature, called to higher things than the heathen have ever dreamed of, descend not to the trifles which content them, but let your spirit rise above these earthly things!

To help you to do so is the objective of the present discourse and, first, dear Friends, I shall try and show you *the proper sphere of care*—"Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." Then, in the second place, I shall try to tell you of *the proper quietus of all anxious* care—"All these things shall be added unto you."

I. Here is first, then, THE PROPER SPHERE OF CARE. There is nothing in man but has its special function and end. And there is in all of us, to a greater or less extent, the propensity to care. There are some men and some women, especially, who are very careful souls. It would not matter in what station of life they might be placed, they would always be very thoughtful, much given to looking ahead and possibly much inclined to look on the dark side of everything. Now, dear Friend, if this is your propensity, here is a way of turning it to good purpose—let your deepest, most intense, and most thorough care be exercised in this direction—"Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness."

What is it that we are to seek? The text says, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God." God has set up His Kingdom in this world—inside the kingdoms of men, there is the Kingdom of God, wherein He rules. It is of another kind from all earthly kingdoms, for Christ said, "My Kingdom is not of this world." It is a purer, higher, truer, more durable kingdom than any Caesar has ever been able to set up.

Our desire should be, first of all, *to enter into the Kingdom of God*—the Kingdom of the new life, the Kingdom of perfect liberty, the Kingdom of faith in Christ, the Kingdom of union to Christ, the Kingdom of the power of the Spirit of God. Have we all entered it? If we have not, let us seek that Kingdom immediately. Before we seek our own door, let us seek first this Kingdom of God, that we may take up our citizenship in it and become loyal subjects of the great King. The way of admission into the Kingdom is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Seek thus to enter the Kingdom of God.

Once in it, then seek *to enjoy its privileges.* When you have become the subjects of the great King, ask Him to fully rule in your spirit and therein to set up His throne of righteousness. Ask that you may have all the peace that appertains to that Kingdom, all the holiness which is the

characteristic of that Kingdom, all the rest, all the joy, all the spiritual wealth and all the sacred ennobling which come to men who are brought under the sway of the Lord's Christ, whose gracious Spirit brings every thought into captivity to His Sovereign will.

Further, being in the Kingdom of God, and enjoying its privileges, then seek *to extend that Kingdom.* Go forth every morning, conquering and to conquer! With the weapons of love and kindness, seek to win men to Christ. Enlisted in this holy army, carry on a constant crusade for Christ. From your earliest waking thoughts, till you fall asleep at night, be intent, first and foremost, to win other hearts to Christ. Let all your care go in this direction—to serve God, to live for God, to glorify God! Seek this as earnestly as the merchant seeks more trade, as the miser seeks more gold, as the sick man seeks a return of health—"Seek you first the Kingdom of God."

Together with this, there is another thing to be sought—"His righteousness." It may mean, seek *that righteousness which God has prepared for us through His dear Son.* Seek to be justified by the imputed righteousness of Christ. But I do not think that is what is meant in this place. Seek God's righteousness, that is, seek a holy *character—seek first of all to be right*, not to be rich. Seek first of all to be just, not to be wealthy. Seek first of all to obey God, not to become the master of others. Seek not to be great, but seek to be good. Let this be your one ambition—"Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." The one aim of the life of a Christian should always be to do the right. It may sometimes seem expensive and involve sacrifice, but it is always safe and, in the long run, it will prove to be the most profitable to do that which is according to the mind of God. Keep you to the King's Highway—never get off of it by trying the devil's "short cuts." Act not according to human policy, but remember that ancient advice, "I counsel you to keep the King's Commandments." You shall find it to be the lodestar of your life if you seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

You and I are bound to seek God's righteousness in our own lives, but we should also *seek to spread that righteousness in the world.* Is there anything that tends towards temperance? I am a Christian, so I am on that side. Is there anything that helps to make men honest? I am on that side. Is there anything that is for the real liberty of mankind? Is there anything that puts down oppression? Is there anything that rectifies social wrong? Is there anything of purity left under Heaven? I am on that side, Sir! We remember the statesman who was known to say that he was on the side of the angels. That is the side on which every good man ought to be—on the side of everything that is pure, right, holy and heavenly. I cannot understand the indifference of some people to the crime that flows in black torrents down our streets. It seems to me that if I am a Christian, I am to seek to promote the Kingdom of righteousness everywhere! And that the side I ought to take in social life, politics and everything else, is the side of righteousness.

"Stand up, stand up, for Jesus," everywhere, because Jesus stands up for that which is true and right, both towards God and towards man—and never fear the consequences! The right harms nobody except those who ought to be harmed and if, for the moment, the right should seem to

bear hard upon certain special interests, yet taking the world all round, and taking God's ages in their length and breadth, the right will prove to be best for all who follow it. The Christian man is bound, first, to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness!

The text says, Seek it. But how are we to seek it? If you are not in that Kingdom, seek it at once by prayer, seek it by earnest cries to God. Seek it specially by faith in Jesus Christ, that you may enter into that Kingdom now. But if you are in it, then seek it by continually being watchful that you are not overtaken by unrighteousness, that you are not led to do anything which would injure the Kingdom of your God and Savior.

Seek the Kingdom of God as a man seeks goodly pearls. Seek it as the traveler in an unknown land seeks to find its rivers and its streams. With your whole heart seek after God, His Truth and everything that is right!

Notice that the text says, "Seek you *first* the Kingdom of God." That is, first in order of time. Young men, seek God first. Get your hearts right with God first. The highest should come first and the highest is God! The most enduring should come first and God is eternal! That which concerns your highest part should come first and your soul is more precious than your body! Your body will soon become food for worms, but your soul will outlast the stars. "Seek you first the Kingdom of God," for this is the first thing. And take things in their proper order, for so shall you take them aright. Seek the Kingdom of God first while yet the blood leaps in your veins, before you are sluggish with approaching age, or even death itself. While yet your eyes are bright and your mind is clear, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness." Seek this first in the week. Be always observant of that first day of the week—give it all to God. "Seek you first the Kingdom of God." Seek it first in each day. Give God the first few minutes of every opening morning. Always begin your day with God. Seek first in order of time the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness.

And then seek it first in order of degree. If you need health, seek it, but seek first the Kingdom of God. If you desire knowledge, seek it, but seek first that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. If you want wealth, seek it in that moderate way which is allowable to you, but first of all let your treasure be in Heaven. Seek your God first, before everything else. You may seek to have the love of those about you, but seek first the love of God. You may seek a wife, and you shall not do ill if you seek aright, but seek first your God. You may seek a house and seek to build up a family and be a blessing to those about you, but first seek your God. Let your rule be, first an altar, then a tent. First seek God and then that which is nearest and dearest to you of earthly things.

Then, again, should it ever come to the alternative of God or earthly things, seek first the Kingdom of God. Let all other things go, but seek you first your God. Look at the martyrs when they had to choose between Christ and death, or dishonor to Christ and life—they never deliberated, brave spirits that they were! They were never anxious about their answer to their accusers, for it was given unto them what they should speak. And they reckoned not with lions, or with the fierce flames, or with the cruel rack. They sought God first, never counting any cost, for no cost could be great for such jewels as they had to conserve! They flung their

lives away without a sigh, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection—and they were no fools, they were gainers by their losses! The ruby crowns they wear to-day and forever are the full reward of all their suffering. "Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness." Let that override everything. Let it, like Aaron's rod, swallow up all other rods. Be this your passion that shall consume you. Be this, if necessary, called of men, "your fanaticism"—better still, your *enthusiasm*—for the Spirit of God within you shall make all other things as dust and ashes in your esteem!

Before passing to the other part of the subject, I must just notice who ought to do this. They especially ought to do it who call themselves followers of Christ. "Seek you first." These are the people whose Father is in Heaven. "Your heavenly Father." "Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness." They are the people for whom God most graciously provides and the people who yield obedience to Him. It is of them that the Lord Jesus Christ said that His Father would take care. "Shall He not much more clothe *you,* O you of little faith?" Provided for by God, seek you first the Kingdom of God! You wear His livery, you eat His bread, you drink from His cup, His broken body is your meat, His shed blood is your drink, He, Himself is your hope, your all! Therefore, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness."

You who aspire to be among this favored band, unless you throw away the hope of the adoption into the family of God, unless you refuse to have God for your Father and your Friend, you, I say, must be included in these to whom Christ says, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." You young men and women who are beginning life, I charge you, lay this text to heart! You, Sirs, who are just about to enter upon new businesses, take care that you soil not your consciences when you unpack your goods! See to it that, from this day and till your last day, it is first, God, and then yourself. No, not so! First God, then your *neighbor*, and *then* yourself! See that you have a higher motive than mere greed of gain, or honor, or comfort! Now say within yourself, "God helping me, I will obey this command of my redeeming Lord, 'Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness.'"

There, dear Friend, is sphere enough for your care. If you want to care, care away! Care for God and care for nothing else. If you want to fret, fret at your sins! If you want something that is worth agitating for, agitate for righteousness! If you want something that shall consume your faculties with zeal, here you have it! If you want something worth seeking, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness."

II. Pause just a moment for solemn thought about this matter and then let us notice the proper quietus of all other care.

Child of God, do you believe your Father? You will not tell me no. Do you believe your Father? If so, listen. "And all these things shall be added unto you."

"All these things." So first, if you make God your care, all things necessary for this life shall come to you. Listen—"Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." "Just now," says one, "I do not see how I am to make ends meet." Then, Brother, there is all the

more reason why you should leave all to God. Remember how the hymn puts it—

"In some way or other, the Lord will provide.
It may not be my way, it may not be your way
And yet in His own way, 'the Lord will provide.'"

Rest you sure of that! David said, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." If you will care only to seek your bread, yourself. If you will make your gain your great objective in life, then you may provide for yourself. But if you will serve God. If you will mind His business, He will mind your business! And as surely as He lives, He will provide for His own.

"All these things." Notice what they are. It is what we shall eat, what we shall drink and with what we shall be clothed. It does not say that we shall have the best broadcloth, or silks and satins. It is not dainties, not the fat of the land, not wine and strong drink that is promised—but you shall have what you may eat, what you may drink and with what you may be clothed. If you will only trust in your God, and serve Him, alone, it shall be with you as it was with Jacob at Bethel, for God fulfilled His Covenant that He made with him there. The Lord will take care that "all these things" shall be added unto you. See to it, then, that you care for Him, and He will care for you.

But, next, "all *these things" shall come by way of promise.* To the ungodly man, "these things" come, but they come by way of hard work. He says they come by way of chance, but to you who believe, they shall come by way of promise. When you eat bread, you shall say, "Blessed be the Lord who has given me this bread which He promised me." When you drink water, you shall say, "Blessed be the Lord who has given me this refreshing draught which He promised me." And when you put on your clothes, though they are, by no means dainty, but of the more common kind, yet you shall feel that it is the livery that God has sent His servant and, as you put them on, you shall say, "This comes from the hand of the great Universal Provider, even the Lord God." "All these things shall be added unto you." It is not so much the thing you have, as the way in which you have it that brings you the blessing!

I spoke, the other Sunday night, about the old Scotch woman and her porridge. She said that she liked her porridge, but she rejoiced and blessed God that she had a Covenant right to the porridge, for the Covenant had given her a right to what she should eat and what she should drink. It is a great mercy to see the mark of the Lord's hand on the common blessings of every day and to say to yourself, "It has come true as my Lord said, 'All these things shall be added unto you.'" They come by way of promise! You do not have to seek them, for they are added unto you!

And, further, *they come to us in a way of Infinite Wisdom.* Dear child of God, your bread and your water and your clothes are all measured out by God. If you have but little, God knew that you could not do so well with more. There are some children you know who must not have too much dinner—they would be ill if they did. If you sometimes are placed in a condition of poverty, it is because only by poverty can some of you ever get to Heaven. I do not doubt that there are some men who behave

grandly in their sphere of life, who, if they were placed in another sphere, would conduct themselves in an unseemly manner. Many a man has tried to scramble up a rock to see whether he could get to the top and he has come down again a dozen times because he was always safer down below. His was not the head that could bear the dizzy height and, therefore, the great Lord would not let him go there. Do you want to have what God knows would hurt you? Do you want doubtful blessings? Is it not better to say, "My times are in Your hands"? If you are a child of God, and you care for Him, He will care for you. He will measure out your cloth. He will measure out your water. He will measure out your food. He will give you what you should have—so let the prayer of Agur be your prayer, also—"Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with food convenient for me."

Again, if we thus look to God and trust His promise, "All these things shall be added unto you." Then *these things will come to us without any fretting or fuming.* If God makes us rich, we shall say, "Well, I never asked for wealth, but now that it has come, I only long for Grace to use it aright." And if it does not come, you will say, "Well, I never expected it. I thank and praise His name for what I have, and ask for Grace that I may know both how to abound and how to suffer loss." That which comes with fretting and fuming has often lost all the goodness of it before you get it. Too often men are like boys who hunt butterflies. See the boy with his hat off, dashing after the fly. It has gone and he pursues it here and there and yonder and, at last, he has caught it, but in catching it he has crushed it to atoms! It is good for nothing. So have men pursued wealth—they have toiled and labored till, when they have gained the wealth they sought, their health has gone, or their mind has failed them—and they have not been able to enjoy it. But that which comes to us in the golden ship of infinite mercy, brought across the sea by a better Pilot than our prudence, comes most sweetly, and we bless and praise and magnify the Lord for it all!

And, once more, that which God adds to us thus *shall come to us without absorbing us.* "All these things shall be *added* unto you," so that, you see, you yourself will be there, and all these things shall be added unto you. To some men wealth has come like the massive shields in the Roman story. When the vestal virgin agreed to open the gates to the soldiers, they promised to give her as her reward that which they carried on their left hands. She meant their golden bracelets and she dreamed that she would be rich. But as each man came in, he flung his shield upon her, and so she was killed and buried beneath the weight! So has it often been with the gains of this world—they have come to the man, but they have buried him—and there has been no man left. According to *The Illustrated London News,* he has left a good deal of money, but there has been no *man* left—the man has been gone long ago. The man was all absorbed, crushed, doubled up under his money—and he, himself, was gone.

I have used before an illustration which I cannot help using again. When you go to a shop and buy some goods, you will get the string and the brown paper in which what you buy is wrapped. So, when a man lives for God and for eternal life, he will get all the things he needs with-

out seeking for them. "Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." When a man gets his string and brown paper, well, they are very useful, but he does not begin crowing about them! The string and brown paper are nothing but the wrappings of something that is more valuable. Yet there are some fellows, who are really nobodies, who have not anything of the highest value, but they have such a lot of string and brown paper that they expect us all to fall down and worship their string and brown paper! And, what is perhaps worse than that, they fall down and worship their own string and brown paper themselves. But the child of God does nothing of the kind. He says, "I needed this blessing and it has come, thank God, but I do not live for this, I do not live for this."

Dr. Johnson said to one who showed him his beautiful garden and park, "These are the things that make it hard to die." Oh, but it is not so for a Christian! Good Mr. Gurney, one day walking through his beautiful garden, said, "This paradise helps me to think of what the Paradise above will be—and makes me long to be there." And I know that it ought to be so and *will* be so with us if we are, first of all, seeking the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, it will be safe to trust us with wealth and it will be equally safe to trust us with none at all! Having grasped the nobler thing, we shall neither be over-balanced if we gain, nor despairing if we lose.

So I leave with you both the precept and the promise of the text—"Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." May this be true of all of you, dear Friends, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 14.

I suppose that many of you know this chapter by heart. I notice that in all old Christians' Bibles, this leaf is well worn—sometimes worn out. We have here our Lord's homely talk to His disciples. It is full of sublimity, yet it is blessedly simple. There is a sort of unveiling of Himself in this chapter. It is not so much like a public discourse as a private conversation and this tends to make the Savior's speech appear the more condescending, and yet, also, the more sublime.

Verse 1. *Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.* There is no cure for heart-trouble but heart-trust. "You believe in God"—you trust in Divine Providence, now trust in the Savior's great Atonement. You have come close to God already, come closer to the Incarnate God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Hear Him say to you, "You believe in *God,* believe also in Me." Your faith already deals with some things. Now let it deal with more things. Your past troubles have been endured by faith. Now endure the *present* in the same way.

2. *In My Father's house are many mansions.* You are at home in Christ even now if you are a Believer in Him. Wherever you are, you are your Heavenly Father's own child, and you have realized the Truth of what David wrote in the 23rd Psalm, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for-

ever." Usually, when we are singing that sweetly solemn hymn, beginning—

Forever with the Lord,"

we are thinking about Heaven. That is quite right. But "forever" means *now* as well as the future! It covers time *here* as well as eternity in *Heaven*. We are with the Lord even *now*—whether we are down here or up there!

2. *If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.* So that, when you go from this earth, you need not fear that you will be launched into space, or that you will have to plunge into the great unknown.

3. *And if 1 go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.* "I will come to you by My Spirit. I will come to you, by-and-by, if my Father shall purpose it, in the hour of death. Or if not, I will come in Person at my Second Advent. But, in any case, I will be sure to come. My dear children, I am going away, but it is only for a little while. I am coming again, so be not troubled as though you had said, 'good-bye' to Me forever. 'I will come again,' and when I do, I shall never go from you again."

4. *And where I go you know, and the way you know.* Yes, we do know where Christ has gone and we also know the way.

5. *Thomas said to Him, Lord, we know not where You go and how can we know the way?* I like to hear Thomas talk, even though his is a very unwise speech. I wonder when you and I ever made wise ones! We never do unless we borrow them, for all that comes of us naturally is childish and foolish, "for we know in part, and we prophesy in part." When the child becomes a man, he will put away childish things, but meanwhile our speech betrays us. We seldom speak even of any of the great mysteries of the Gospel without uttering some words of our own which show that we have never really understood them. I think the Lord likes us to display our ignorance, first, that we may know it, and then that He may remove it.

6. *Jesus said unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man comes unto the Father, but by Me.* Christ has gone to the Father's upper house to make it ready for all the redeemed family. We could never have entered there if He had not gone in first. And even now there is no coming to the Father in faith or in prayer except by Christ. We must not even *dream* of communion with God except through our Lord Jesus Christ. Luther used to say—and to say very wisely, too—"I will have nothing to do with an absolute God! I must come to God by Christ Jesus." "No man comes unto the Father, but by Me."

7. *If you had known Me, you would have known My Father, also, and from henceforth you know Him, and have seen Him.* All of the Father that we can know is visible in Christ, "for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." And if we truly know Christ, we also know the Father. Christ always seems to be knowable, for He brings Himself down to such a nearness to us that it seems easy to know Him. Well, then, knowing Christ, we also know the Father and have seen Him!

8. *Philip said to Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.* Thomas spoke just now like a babe in Grace. Now here is Philip talking

like another baby! Yet how bold his speech is! "Lord, show us the Father." Why, no man can see the Father's face and live! Yet here is a child of God apparently forgetful of that fact.

9. *Jesus said to him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father; and why say you, then, Show us the Father?* Is not this a homely talk between the Master and His disciples? Said I not rightly that Christ, here, seems to unveil Himself? He lets these children of His talk away much at their ease—and I think we ought to be at ease when we are talking with Christ. Some like a very stately service in their worship, something very grand, that makes ordinary worshippers stand afar off. Let them enjoy it if they can, but as for us, we prefer something which permits us to come very near to our Lord.

10. *Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?* Yes, Lord, we do believe that. Your eternal and inseparable union with the Father is a doctrine about which we have no question whatever!

10. *The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself, but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works.* Notice, dear Friends, that even the Lord Jesus Christ did not profess to teach doctrines out of His own mind! He says, "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself." Now, if it is so with the Master, how much more ought it to be so with the servants! But have you not noticed how it is with the great men of the pulpit in these days? It is, "What I have thought out, I make known to you." It is, "What has come to me by the spirit of the age, the culture of the period, I tell you." God save us from this kind of talk! It is no business of mine, I know, to ever come to you merely with a message of my own, for if the Lord Jesus Christ did not do so, what a fool His servant must be if he pretends to do it! No, if it is not revealed in this Book, neither shall it be taught by us, nor ought it to be received by you! So Jesus says to His disciples, "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself." He glories in His union with the Father, and in the fact that He does not come as an independent teacher of thoughts of His own inventing, but He tells out to us what is in His Father's heart.

11, 12. *Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father.* We cannot do Christ's *redeeming* work—it would be blasphemy to suppose that we could, for He said of it, *"It is finished."* But we can do the kind of work that Christ did in instructing men and in being the means of blessing men. Many of the Apostles brought to a knowledge of the Truth of God more souls than their Lord did by His personal ministry. He was pleased, after the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of *Pentecost,* to bring great multitudes to the faith by some of His servants, while He, Himself preached, comparatively speaking, to but few, only journeying up and down that little land of Palestine and scarcely traversing all of it. And if we will but trust Him and seek to imitate His wondrous life, we, also, shall do the works that He did, and do them on an even larger scale, and do them with even greater results.

13, 14. *And whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.* Observe the *breadth* of prayer—"If you shall ask anything." Yet observe, also, the *limit* of prayer—"If you shall ask anything *in My name*." There are some things which we should not ask in Christ's name, as we have no promise about them, or because we have indications that they would be contrary to God's usual method of procedure. We must not ask, in the name of Christ, for what would be absurd or outrageous for us to expect God to grant. Neither dare we use that sacred name in pleading for things which would only be for the satisfaction of our own will. We must let the will of God rise above all! But, subject to that will, we may ask anything in Christ's name and He will do it.

15. *If you love Me, keep My Commandments.* Obedience is the truest proof of love. Some, out of supposed love to Christ, have attempted or committed acts of fanaticism. They have been enthusiastic and, in many cases, doubtless, very sincere. But they have also been very unwise. Here is the best thing that you can do out of love for Christ—"If you love Me, keep My Commandments."

16. *And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever*—"One who will not need to die and so to be separated from you, but who, once coming to you, shall tarry with you throughout the ages."

17. *Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him: but you know Him; for He dwells with you, and shall be in you.* Do you not notice how this verse contradicts the current thought of the period about, "the spirit of the age" being so much in advance of the Spirit of all past ages? Listen again to these words of our Lord—"The Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive." The world is always receiving one form of falsehood or another. Tossed to and fro and never abiding long in one plac3, it cries, "This is the truth," or, "That is the truth," or, "Now we have it; *this* is the truth." But Christ says, "The Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him: but you know Him; for He dwells with you, and shall be in you."

18. *I will not leave you comfortless.* Or, "orphans," for that is the meaning of the original. "I will not leave you orphans."

18-20. I *will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me. Because I live, you shall live also. At that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.* This is all very simple. The words are nearly all words of one syllable, yet there are depths here in which a leviathan might plunge and lose himself!

21-23. *He that has My Commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves Me: and he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him. Judas said unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man loves Me, he will keep My Words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.* Only holy men can see the holy Christ, and it is only as we walk in obedience to Him that we can have the Son of God walking with us, and the Father and the Son dwelling with us.

24. *He that loves Me not keeps not My sayings: and the Word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent Me.* Notice, again, that important Truth of God, and observe what weight and what stress Christ lays upon it.

25, 26. *These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you.* Brothers and Sisters, ought we not to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, since the Father, Himself, does everything in that name? Even concerning the sending of the Comforter, Christ says, "whom the Father will send in My name." Then He would certainly have the Father and the children acting upon the same principles—the Father glorifying Christ by sending the Spirit in His name—and ourselves glorifying Christ by presenting our prayers and praises in that one adorable name!

27. *Peace I leave with you.* "I told you not to let your heart be troubled. Now I go further and I leave you this precious legacy of peace—'Peace I leave with you.'"

27. *My peace I give unto you.*—"My own deep peace, which even My sufferings and death cannot disturb."

27-29. *Not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard how I said unto you, I go away and come again unto you. If you loved Me, you would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that, when it is come to pass, you might believe.* Oh, what numbers of things which Christ foretold have come to pass already! Have you, dear Friends, believed all the more because of them? How many answers to prayer, how many deliverances out of trouble, how many helps in the time of need have you had! Surely, when all this has come to pass, you ought to believe.

30, 31. *Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me Commandment, even so I do, Arise, let us go hence.* So the Savior went forth to His passion and His death that all might know the supremacy of His love to the Father and His love to His people. And so let us, in our measure, be always ready to say, "Arise, let us go hence," to service or to suffering, since our Savior leads the way.

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

JESUS AND HIS BRETHREN
NO. 2516

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 9 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTTOBER 4, 1885.

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him, and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; does my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me here: for God did send me before you to preserve life."
Genesis 45:1-5.

I NEED not say to you, Beloved, who are conversant with Scripture, that there is scarcely any personal type in the Old Testament which is more clearly and fully a portrait of our Lord Jesus Christ than is the type of Joseph. You may run the parallel between Joseph and Jesus in very many directions, yet you need never strain the narrative so even much as once. I am not about to attempt that task on the present occasion, but I am going to take this memorable portion of the biography of Joseph and show you how, in making himself known to his brethren, he was a type of our Lord revealing himself to us.

It seems that, at last, Joseph could bear the suspense no longer. He knew who his brethren were, he knew which was Benjamin and which was Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah and the rest, and he remembered all the story of their early days together. But they did not know him. They thought him some mysterious potentate, some great ruler of the land of Egypt—as indeed he was—but they did not know so much about him as he knew about them. Consequently, there was a distance between him and them and his loving heart ached to bridge that gulf by manifesting himself to them. It is the way of love to desire to make itself known.

Now, in a still higher sense, the Lord Jesus Christ knows all about those in this place whom He has redeemed with His precious blood. The Father gave them to Him from before the foundation of the world and He took them into Covenant relationship with Himself before the earth was. Often has He thought of these as His beloved ones. His delights have been with the sons of men and He has looked forward and foreseen all

that would happen to them. Ever since these redeemed and chosen ones have been born into the world, He has watched them so carefully that He has counted the very hairs on their heads! They are so precious to Him, as the purchase of His heart's blood, that they have never taken a single wandering step that His eyes have tracked the mazes of their lives. He knows them altogether—knows their sins, knows their sorrows, knows their ignorance of Him, knows how, sometimes, that ignorance has been willful and they have continued in the dark when they might have walked in the Light of God—and now, at this moment, speaking after the manner of men, the heart of Christ aches to manifest Himself to some of them! He wants to be known. He thirsts to be known. He can only be loved as He is known and He pines for love and so He pines to manifest Himself to His loved ones!

Yes, and there are some of them who know Him already, in a measure, but their measure is a very little one. It is but as a drop compared with the great deep sea. I have been praying and am still praying, and I am not alone in the prayer, that this very hour the Lord Jesus may be pleased to manifest Himself to His own blood-bought ones! To all who have been already called by His Grace and to many not yet called to Him, may He come in the fullness of His own glorious revelation and make Himself known! For know you not this—that the revelation of Christ in the Word will not save you unless Christ is revealed *in you and to you personally*? No, more than that—the Christ born at Bethlehem will not save you unless that Christ is formed in you the hope of Glory—He must Himself come to you and make Himself known to you. It will not suffice you to read about His healing the sick. He must touch you with His hand or you must touch the hem of His garment with your hand. Somehow there must be *personal* contract between yourself and the Lord Jesus Christ, or else all that He did will mean nothing to you. Let this be our prayer now—that to each man and woman and child here the Lord may graciously make Himself known.

I. Notice, first, that THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, LIKE JOSEPH, REVEALS HIMSELF IN PRIVATE FOR THE MOST PART.

Joseph cried, "Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren." It would not have been seemly for this great ruler to lose all command of himself in the presence of the Egyptians. His heart was carried away with love to his brothers and the cry that he lifted up was so loud that the people in other parts of the palace could hear that something strange was going on! But he could not bear that they should all stand around and gaze with curious eyes upon their ruler as he revealed himself to his brothers. They would not have understood it. They might have misrepresented it. At any rate, he could not bear that the scene of affection which was now to be enacted should be witnessed by strangers, so he cried, "Cause every man to go out from me."

My dear Friends, do you really want to see and know the Lord Jesus Christ savingly? Have you ever beheld Him by the eye of faith? Then,

permit be to exhort you to be literally much alone—searching the Scriptures—and much alone in private, secret prayer. That gracious revelation of Himself to you as bearing your sins and putting away your guilt, will nor be likely to come to you until you get a little time in private, where you can quietly meditate upon your Lord and His great atoning work. The mischief of this busy London is that we are fretted and worn with incessant occupations—we would, all of us, be much stronger and better if we saw less of the faces of men and more of the face of God. But for a penitent sinner who desires to behold his pardon written in the smiling Countenance of Christ, there must be solitude. You must rise earlier in the morning and get a half-hour to yourself, then, or you must sit up later at night, or you must steal out of bed at the dead of night, or you must even resolve that you will not go to your business until the first business of finding Christ is ended once and for all! I feel persuaded that with some of you, at least, there will be no peace to your heart and no comfortable sight of Christ until you have gone upstairs and said, "Here, alone, with every man put out and every wandering thought excluded, will I bow the knee and cry, and look, and hope, and believe until I can say, 'I have seen the Lord! I have looked to Him whom I have pierced and I have seen my sin put away by His death upon the Cross.'"

Further, I want you to notice not only the excellence of solitude in general, but *the benefit of a kind of mental solitude.* Brothers and Sisters, if in the House of God, in the midst of the assembly, the Lord Jesus Christ is ever to manifest Himself personally to us, it must be in a kind of mental and spiritual solitude. I believe that the preacher will never succeed in winning a soul if he tries to make himself prominent in his own preaching. An old man who was accustomed to catching trout in a certain stream, was asked by one who had been fishing in vain, "Have you caught any fish today?" "Yes, Sir," he said, "I have a little basketful." "Oh," said the other, "I have been fishing all day long and I have taken none." "No," said the man, "but there are three rules about catching trout, which, perhaps, you have not observed. The first is—Get quite out of sight. And the second is—Get still more out of sight. And the third is—Get still more out of sight than that—and you will catch them."

And I believe that it is just so in preaching. If the preacher can get quite out of sight, still more out of sight and yet still more out of sight, then he will be the means of bringing souls to Christ. And you, dear Friends, will only see Him well in any kind of preaching when you try to forget the *man*. I mean that remark to apply in two ways. Perhaps the preacher is one whom you dearly love and you expect much from him. Well then, forget him! Expect *nothing* from him and look away from him to your Lord! Or, perhaps, the preacher's voice has no particular charm for you. The man is not very bright in his utterances. Well, forget him and try to see his Master! Forget the preacher for good and for bad, for better and for worse—and get to the Lord, Himself.

There is a story told of Mr. Erskine having preached on one occasion before the communion and a good woman, a child of God, heard him

with such delight and was so much fed and satisfied, that she left her own pastor and went some miles on the next Lord's Day to go and hear Mr. Erskine again. That morning he was dreadfully dry and barren, or at least *she* thought that he was. There was no food for her whatever and, being not a very wise woman, she went in to tell him so. She said, "Oh, Mr. Erskine, I heard you at the communion with such delight! You seemed to take me to the very gates of Heaven and I was fed with the finest of the wheat. So I have come this morning on purpose to hear you and I confess that I have got nothing out of you!" So he said, "My good woman, what did you go for last Lord's Day?" "I went to the communion, Sir." "Yes, you went to the communion. That was to have communion with the Lord?" "Yes," she said, "I did." "Well," said Mr. Erskine, "that is what you went for and you got it—and the Lord blessed my word to you, and you had communion with Him. Now, what did you come here for this morning?" "I came to hear you, Sir." "And you have got what you came for, there is nothing in me."

Think of this story when you are remembering the Lord's servants and forgetting their Master, Himself. I believe that as you are sitting here, you whose eyes have already been opened by the Spirit of God, if you will but say, "Cause every man to go out from me. Shut the door, I have entered into my closet even while in the pew. I am alone, now, and I desire to see no man but Jesus, only." You shall see Him, for He manifests Himself to His people all alone! Oh, that each one here would say, "There is nothing but Christ that I desire to see, there is nothing else I wish to remember, I would think only of my Lord Jesus. May He be pleased to reveal Himself to me!"

II. The second remark I have to make is this—when the Lord Jesus Christ reveals Himself to any man for the first time, it is usually in the midst of terror. And THAT FIRST REVELATION OFTEN CREATES MUCH SADNESS.

When Joseph made himself known to his brethren and said to them, "I am Joseph," "they were troubled in his presence." Judah had made a very plaintive speech when it was threatened that Benjamin should be detained in Egypt and all the brothers were in deep trouble, so that when the great ruler said to them, "I am Joseph," they were not filled with joy by his words. So we read, "His brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence." He was Joseph, their brother, and he loved every one of them—yet, "they were troubled at his presence." It was the best thing that could have happened to them, to be in the presence of him who was sent of God to save their lives with a great deliverance. Yet, "they were troubled at his presence."

And you and I recollect, perhaps, when, under a deep sense of sin and sorrow when we had our first perception of Christ's salvation—instead of being glad at it, we were "troubled at His Presence." "Why," we said to ourselves, "this Christ is He whom we have despised, rejected and crucified." There did not seem, at first, much comfort for us in the manifestation of Christ. One said, in order to cheer us, "He died for sinners." "But,"

we answered, "surely not for such sinners as we are." Even the very sound of that blessed word, "salvation," grated on our ears because we thought we should be like the fabled Tantalus—up to our necks in water which we could not drink, or surrounded by fruit which we could not pluck. "He may have died for others," we seem to say, "but scarcely for us." "We were troubled at His Presence." Even the House of God, to which we continued to go, was a place of terror to us and we cried, like Jacob did at Bethel, "How dreadful is this place!" In the worst sense of that word, it really was "dreadful" to us—full of dread although we believed it to be "none other but the House of God, and the gate of Heaven."

We said, "What right have we to be in the House of God? How can we expect to enter Heaven even though its gate is so near to us?" We heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, but we sorrowfully exclaimed, "Ah, that is only too true! He will pass by but He will never stop to look at us." We heard that precious text, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life," but we said, "What is it to believe in Him? How can we believe in Him?" The Light of God seemed shifting all around us, but our eyes were blind to it! The music of Heaven was sounding in all its sweetness, but our ears were closed to its melody! Everlasting love was coming near to us, yet our hearts did not open to receive it and, therefore, we could not answer Christ, for we "were troubled at His Presence."

Dear Friends, if any of you are in this sad state, do not, therefore, be driven away from our Jesus, our greater Joseph but stand still in His presence, even though you are troubled at it, for that experience, though it is bitter, is a bitter sweet! There may be trouble in Christ's Presence, but there is a far greater trouble in being driven from His Presence, and from the glory of His power. So keep standing just where you are, even though you stand trembling, for, by-and-by, and perhaps this very hour, He will graciously reveal Himself to you and you shall no longer tremble at His Presence, but, on the contrary, you shall rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory, as you perceive that this Joseph, this Jesus, is your Brother, your Savior, your Friend, your All in All!

II. Now, thirdly, though the first appearance of Jesus, like that of Joseph, may cause sadness, THE FURTHER REVELATION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST TO HIS BRETHREN BRINGS THEM THE GREATEST POSSIBLE JOY.

If you look at this passage when you are at home, you will perhaps say to yourself, "The second time that Joseph spoke to his brethren, he had not much more to say than he said the first time. For then he said, 'I am Joseph; does my father yet live?' And the second time there was as much the same burden in his language, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt." So, when Christ reveals Himself in Grace to any poor heart, the revelation, for substance, is much the same as at the first, yet there is a great difference. When, for the first time, I heard the Gospel to my soul's salvation, I thought that I had never really heard the Gospel before and I began to think that the preachers to whom I had listened

had not truly preached it. But, on looking back, I am inclined to believe that I had heard the Gospel fully preached many *hundreds* of times, before, but that *this* was the difference—I then heard it as though I heard it not—and when I *did* hear it, the message may not have been any more clear in itself than it had been at former times, but the power of the Holy Spirit was present to open my ears and to guide the message to my heart!

O dear Friend, if you have heard me preach Christ crucified and you have not yet seen Christ to your soul's salvation, I pray that you may do so now! I do not suppose that there will be any difference in the sermon, or in the Truths of God proclaimed. The difference will be that in the one case it has not reached your heart and in the other case it will. O blessed Master, speak comfortably to the hearts of sinners and to the hearts of Your people, too! Make the old, old Gospel be new to us by clothing it with a new power within our hearts and consciences, and throughout our lives!

Yet, there were some differences in the words which Joseph uttered to his brethren. If you turn again to the narrative, you will see that he began his second speech by saying to them, "Come near to me, I pray you." *There was a longing for nearness to those he loved* and that is the point of my sermon at this time. I want you who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but who are, nevertheless, His elect, His redeemed ones, to come near to Him, now, by an act of faith and trust Him with yourselves, your souls, your sins and everything else! Stand not back through shame or fear, you chief of sinners, for He says, "Come near to Me, I pray you. 'Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'" As for you who are already His Brothers and Sisters, come near to Him, for to you, also, He says, "Come near to Me, I pray you."

Oh, if our Lord were actually here in bodily Presence—and I can almost picture Him in the loveliness and glory of Divine Majesty—if He were to stand here and say to us, "Come near to Me, I pray you," we would, with solemn reverence, bow before Him and we would, with joyful obedience, come near to Him and try to hold Him by the feet and worship Him! Would not each one of you press forward to come near to Him? I am sure that you would! Well, that is what you have to do in a spiritual fashion. We know not Christ after the flesh, but we do know Him after the Spirit. So, come near to Him, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ! Believe in Him, again, as you did at the first! Look to Him again as if you had never looked before! Worship Him as your Lord and your Redeemer. Prostrate yourselves before Him and adore Him as the Son of God revealed in our midst—come near to Him!

Then talk to Him. Tell Him all that is in your inmost heart. Unburden to Him your cares and your doubts. Yes, and come near to Him with your fondest affection and say to Him, now, in the silence of your spirit, "Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You." Come near to Christ with all your tears of penitence. Come near with your alabaster box of gratitude. Come near with the kisses of your lips of love. Come near with your

whole heart's purest affection and come *now*, for that is what He invites you to do! It is a part of His manifestation of Himself to you that you should endeavor to come near to Him. Cry, "Stand back, O self! Stand back, O devil! Stand back, all care for the world! Stand back, even care for the Church just now! My heart must come near unto her Lord and sit like a dove on His finger and be satisfied to look with her gentle eyes at the beauties of His Countenance." God help us to do so in response to our Lord's gracious invitation, "Come near to Me, I pray you."

Then, as if to help us to come near, *our Lord, in this revelation, declares His relationship to us*. The speaker in the type says, "I am Joseph your brother" and the Lord Jesus Christ, though He is Head over all things to His Church and King and Lord of death and Hell, yet says to everyone who believes in Him, "I am your Brother; I am your kith and kin; Head of the family, but still of the family and touched with the feeling of your infirmities, for I was in all points tempted like as you are." Do not imagine, concerning the Lord Jesus, that there is only a fanciful or sentimental brotherhood between Him and you. It is a *real* brotherhood—there is no such brotherhood under Heaven so complete and true as that which exists between Christ and every blood-washed soul, for it is not a brotherhood according to the flesh, but an everlasting, *spiritual* brotherhood. An eternal union of the closest and most vital kind is established between Christ and everyone who believes in Him.

We do not reckon it hard, do we, to win a brother's heart? If we have been a little cold towards a brother, his heart soon warms to us again and, as for our Lord, if we have not seen Him of late, if any of us have not loved Him as we should, if we are saying, "We are troubled at His Presence. We hardly dare come to His table," may He say to us, "Come near to Me, I pray you. I am your Brother. Come near, come nearer, nearer still. I am pleased when you are near." Come with your sin and your lukewarmness. Come just as you are, as you came to Him at the first, and He will receive you, and will manifest Himself unto you as He does not unto the world.

In addition to revealing his relationship, which was a great motive for Joseph inviting his brothers to come near, he also told them a secret. He said, "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt." I think he mentioned that to show them that he must be Joseph their brother, for who else in all the world knew of that shameful action on their part? I do not suppose that the Midianite merchants who bought Joseph knew that he was sold by his own brothers, or if they did know, there were none of them in Pharaohs palace, for they were Ishmaelites and they had gone their way to traffic somewhere else. All who knew of that wicked transaction were Joseph and his brothers, so by this password he lets them know that there was a sort of freemasonry between them. This was the sign, "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt." It made them blush, I dare say, and it must have made them mourn. But it also made them feel, "Yes, that is our brother. Nobody but Joseph would know that we sold him into slavery."

And, dear Friends, have you ever seen your Well-Beloved as He reads your heart? I have known Him read mine from the first thought in it to the last and I have thanked Him as He has read it, for I have said, "Lord, You have read that book right through, and now You know all things, You know that I love you. Alas, I did sell you into Egypt! There was a day when I chose Egypt and its pleasures rather than You and there have been days since when I have sold You again into Egypt by treating You with lukewarmness, and giving myself up to other lovers. Yes, Lord, I have sold You to the Ishmaelites by doubting You and mistrusting You. And by my sins I have stripped You of Your many-colored garment. And by my own folly I have let You go away from Your Father's house and from the chamber of her that bore You. You know all this, my Lord, but I know You, too, because You know me so well."

Then notice that when Joseph thus revealed himself to his brethren, he did not say more till *he had sweetly put away all their offenses against him*. They had been troubled because they knew that they had sold him into Egypt, but he said to them, "Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me here." So Jesus says to His loved ones who have grieved Him by their evil deeds, "Be not grieved, for I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.' Be not angry with yourselves, for I will receive you graciously and love you freely. Be not angry with yourselves, for your sins, which are many, are all forgiven. Go and sin no more. For My name's sake will I defer My anger. Therefore, 'Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson they shall be as wool.'"

Many of you know the way our Savior talks. I pray that He may just now make every Believer sure that there is not a sin against him in God's Book of Remembrance. May you, dear Friends, be clear in your conscience from all dead works! May you have the peace of God which passes all understanding to keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus and in the clear white light of your Savior's glorious Presence. May you see the wounds He endured when suffering for your sins! Then will you sing with the disciple whom Jesus loved, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Last of all, Joseph was not satisfied with thus revealing himself to his brethren, and assuming them of his forgiveness, *but he promised them rich supplies for the future*. To my mind this was the next best news to his message of forgiveness. He said to them, in effect, "You have had two years of famine. It is only through me that you have been preserved alive. You have come down to Egypt with your donkeys and your sacks, and you have taken home provender to my father and to your households. But there are yet five more years in which there will be no plowing and no harvest. What will become of you? What little you had in store is already all consumed. God has sent me here that through those five years I

may nourish you. You shall come down and live in Goshen, on the fat of the land of Egypt, and you shall never have any need, for all the treasures of the land of Egypt are mine and I will take care of you. You shall never know any need."

In like manner, Beloved, your Lord stands and says to you, "You will have many more troubles." Some of my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ who are here will be in Heaven before five more years have expired. They have good reason to be very grateful to God. But to some of us who are younger, it may be that God has appointed many a year to abide here. But our Savior lives!—

"He is at the Father's side,
The Man of Love, the Crucified"

and the arrangements of Providence are in His hands and all that Providence shall be overruled for us. "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." You will be in Egypt for a while longer, dear Friend, but you will be in the Goshen of Egypt and the good of all the land is yours! Oh, what a blessing it is to think that we have a Brother who reveals Himself to us as the Universal Provider who will not let us have a need, but will take care that, before our need comes, the supply shall be ready and we shall have nothing to do but to rejoice in Him who cares for us!

Let not that sweet thought take away from your minds what I want to be the center of all the meditation, namely, that you should come near to your Lord. We never use a crucifix—we would think it sinful to do so. Neither do I want to have an imaginary crucifix, by trying to set Christ before you so that you should picture Him mentally! But I want your faith to do much more than imagination can. The Lord Jesus Christ is *spiritually* here in the midst of us, according to His gracious promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And He hears me speaking these words at this moment—I am as sure of it as if I saw that mystic Presence with my natural eyes. If I did see Him, I know that I would fall at His feet as dead, and the rest of this service would have to be spent in awe-struck silence by everyone that did behold Him!

But, O Son of God and Son of Mary, Jesus Christ our Savior, we trust You wholly and alone to save us and we love You with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. And as we live *by* You, we pray You to help us to live *for* You, to live *to* You, to live *like* You and, by-and-by, to live *with* You! We could almost wish that we might now fall down and kiss Your dear feet, but You are not here in visible Presence, for You have gone up into Glory. But You are here spiritually and we come to You and say, "Lord, You are ours, and we are Yours. We will hold You and will not let You go."—

"Sun of my Soul, Savior dear,
It is not night if You are near."

Come, stay with me while yet the evening shade shall linger, till death's dark night comes on and then, instead of night, let the morning break

upon my gladdened eyes because it is You that has come, the Life, the Resurrection, and not death at all!

Come, Beloved, can you not get nearer to your Lord? Can you not speak familiarly with Him? Can you not whisper into His ear the story of your love?—

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove"

and help us now to come near to Jesus! Amen and Amen!

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 45:1-13; SONG OF SOLOMON 1:1-7; 3:1-5.

Genesis 45:1, 2. *Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him: and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud.* Emotion long pent up grows intense and when, at last, it bursts forth, it cannot be restrained. "He wept aloud."

2, 3. *And the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; does my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him for they were troubled at his presence.* What a rush of thoughts must have passed through their minds when they remembered all their unkind behavior toward him! There is no wonder that "they were troubled at his presence."

4. *And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you.* He pleads with them. He who was far greater than they—a prince among peasants—now prays to them! And is it not amazing that the Lord Jesus, our infinitely-greater Brother, at times pleads with us, even as He said to the woman at the well, "Give Me to drink"? Joseph said unto his brethren, "Come near to me, I pray you."

4, 5, *And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me here: for God did send me before you to preserve life.* "You did very wrong, but I say nothing about that, for I want you to notice how God has overruled your action, how your sin has been made to be the means of your preservation and the preservation of many besides. 'God did send me before you to preserve life.'"

6. *For these two years has the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years in which there shall neither be eating nor harvest.* There were to be five more dreary years of utter desolation and need.

7. *And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.* How wonderfully those two things meet in practical harmony—the free will of man and the predestination of God! Man acts just as freely and just as guiltily as if there were no predestination whatever. And God ordains, arranges, supervises, and overrules just as accurately as if there were no free will in the universe! There are some purblind people who only believe one or other of these two Truths of God, yet they are both true and the one is as true as the other. I believe that much of the theology which is tinged with free will is

true and I know that the teaching which fully proclaims electing love and Sovereign Grace is also true—and you may find much of both of these Truths in the Scriptures. The fault lies in trying to compress all Truth of God under either of those two heads. These men were verily guilty for selling their brother, yet God was verily wise in permitting him to be sold. The inference which Joseph draws from their misconduct is, of course, an inference of love. Love may not be always logical, but it is sweetly consoling, as it must have been in this case.

8. *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.* See how Joseph traces God's hand in his whole career?

9. *Hasten you, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not.* See how love attracts? Joseph must have his brothers near him. Now he wants to have his father, also, near. "Go up to my father, and say unto him, 'Come down unto me.'" See how great love turns pleader again? He who said to his brothers, "Come near to me," sends to his father the message, "Come down unto me."

10. *And you shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near unto me, you, and your children, and your children's children, and your flocks, and your herds, and all that you have.* Our common saying, "Love me, love my dog," is very true! Love me, love even my flocks and my herds. So the blessing of God extends to all His chosen people have—not only to their children, but to all that they possess.

11-13. *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. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaks unto you. And you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hasten and bring down my father here.* Love is impatient to have the object of its affection brought near. Now we will read two short portions out of the Song of Solomon from which you will see how love evermore craves for nearness to the loved one. The Song opens thus:—

Song of Solomon 1:1-4. *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. Because of the savor of Your good ointments Your name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love You. Draw me, we will run after You.* Still is love pleading, you see, but here it is the other side pleading for nearness, the lowly one crying for help to get nearer to the Heavenly Bridegroom. "Draw me, we will run after You."

4, 5. *The King has brought me into His chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine: the upright love You. I am black, but comely, O you daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.* The spouse was black in herself; sunburned through her toil and hard suffering; yet lovely in the

sight of her Beloved, and comely to look upon "as the curtains of Solomon."

6, 7. *Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun has looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept. Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed.*—Still is there that same craving for nearness to the Beloved. Since we love Christ, we desire to be with Him. We cannot bear His absence. "Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed."

7. *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?* See, dear Friends, how this same seeking after the Beloved comes out in another shape in the third chapter of the Song.

Song of Solomon 3:1. *By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loves: I sought Him, but I found Him not.* Sometimes, the most eager search does not at once obtain its end. For wise reasons, Christ sometimes hides Himself from His seeking people.

2-5. *I will rise now and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways 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 while 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*—"By everything that is timid, and delicate, and pure, and full of love, I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem."—

5. *That you stir not up, nor awake my love, till He pleases.* "I have found my Beloved, and I would not lose Him again. He has come to me, so I will not grieve Him and drive Him away." That is the one strain of our reading—"Come near to me, I pray You; and when You come near me, stay by me still."

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.

FROM TWENTY-FIVE TO THIRTY-FIVE
NO. 2517

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 16, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTTOBER 11, 1885.

"And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; go you also into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you. And they went their way." Matthew 20:3, 4.

No parable teaches all sides of the Truth of God. It is wrong to attempt to make a parable run on all fours—it is intended to convey some one lesson—and if it teaches that, we must not attempt to draw everything else out of it. This parable sets forth the great God as a householder going forth to find men to work for Him, but let no man imagine that God needs any of us! He was perfect—perfectly happy and perfectly glorious—long before wings of angels moved in space, or before space and time even existed! God was always and still is self-contained and all-sufficient and if He chooses to make any creatures, or to preserve or use any of the creatures He has formed, that is not because He needs them, or is in the least degree dependent upon them. If God comes forth in wondrous Grace to call any of us to work in His vineyard, it is not because He needs us, but because we need Him. He does not set us to work because He needs workers, but because we need work. He calls us not because He requires us, but because we require to be called.

Let no man, therefore, attach great importance to himself, as though God's cause or Kingdom depended upon him. It may be that we fancy, sometimes, in our little sphere, that if we were gone, there would be a great gap, but the Lord did very well without us before we were born and He will do just as well when we are dead and gone. His work never really suffers, after all. Workers die, but the work lives on. If any man, therefore, should be so boldly wicked as to suppose that God will be robbed of any of His Glory if he stands out against Him, or that God will suffer because he does not intend to serve Him, he is greatly mistaken! The loss of glory will be your loss, Sir, not God's, and the loss of benefit will be your loss, not God's. If He were hungry, He would not tell you, for the cattle upon a thousand hills are His and the world with the fullness thereof. He can effect His eternal purposes without our help and He can as easily effect them even if we choose to resist Him.

He is infinitely greater than we are, so that what I shall have to say to you at this time about our going to work for God in His vineyard is not to be understood as though we could do anything meritorious in the eyes of our Maker, or as if He had any need of us. He is great and glorious, whatever we may be, and it is for our joy, our safety, our everlasting

happiness that we should become His servants. It is necessary for the right ordering of our lives, that our hearts may be in tune to yield the music of joy, that we should be tuned by obedience to His will and that we should learn to serve Him. My prayer is that, this very hour, some who have never known our Savior may find Him making Himself known to them and engaging them in His service.

I. I shall begin by asking, first, HOW MAY THE LORD BE SAID TO GO OUT?

Please notice what it says in the first verse of this chapter, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning." Then it says in our text, "He went out about the third hour." In the fifth verse, "Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hours." And in the sixth verse, "And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle." How may God be said to go out?

This language is used, first, to teach us that *the impulse to serve God always comes from God to us*. It never comes from within ourselves, first of all. If any man wills to serve God, there was another will which moved his will, or else his will would never have moved towards God. Out of the various men who are mentioned here, no one went to the vineyard, either early in the morning or later in the day, and *requested to be employed*. The householder came out into the marketplace and engaged his men. At the third hour, the sixth hour and the ninth hour, not one had come of his own free will, but in every case the first overture was from the householder—"He went out to hire laborers into his vineyard." And at the eleventh hour, though the day was coming to its close, and the sun was almost down, yet even then, men were not wise enough to wish to conclude the day in the right service, but they still remained, as they had been all day, idling in the marketplace until the generous employer came out and expostulated with them and induced them to enter the vineyard. No man ever comes to God till God first comes to him, so it is my earnest desire that the impulses of Divine Grace may be, even now, felt in many hearts! God the Holy Spirit is able to work upon the judgment, the understanding, the affections, the fears, the hopes, the will of men—and as He works upon them, He makes men willing, in the day of God's power, so that they turn to Him and enter into His service. That is, I think, the first meaning of God's going out.

But, next, it means that *there are times and seasons when God seems especially to display His Grace.* There are such seasons, I believe, whenever the Gospel is preached. In this one Church and under one ministry for nearly 32 years, we have almost continually enjoyed the converting power of God's Grace. There has been a greater increase, sometimes, or a little diminution now and then, but, for the most part, the unbroken stream of blessing has run on at much the same rate all the while. It never was deeper, nor was the current more strong than now, for which we praise the Lord with all our hearts. But it has usually happened with Churches that there are certain seasons when men are brought to Christ in large numbers. The Word comes home with unusual power, there is a sudden flight of the arrows of conviction and the wounded cry out, "What

must we do to be saved?" Then is a great outpouring of the healing balm and the wounds of sin are cured, the bleeding of the pierced conscience is stanched. When God comes out, as it were, from His hiding place, to deal thus with the souls of men, it is a time of revival!

Personally, *to most men, there is a time of God's going forth when they are specially moved to holy things.* It happens to some in childhood. While they are yet young, God speaks with them as He did with Samuel. Perhaps even on their little bed at night He appears to them, and says, "Samuel, Samuel," and then helps them to answer, "Here am I, for You did call me." To others, God comes a little farther on, when it is the second hour of the day, while yet they are in the heyday of their youth. It was the great privilege of some of us for the Lord to call us while we were yet young men. And it is a great blessing when God comes to us at that important period of our history. To others He appears when they are advanced in life and, blessed be God, He comes also to some when the day is well-near closed—when the furrows of care are on their brows and the snows of age are on their heads! He comes with power, by the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit, and He speaks to them and they yield to His speaking and give themselves up to be His servants for the rest of their life. Pray, dear children of God, that the Divine Householder may come into this marketplace, even now, and may speak to young and old effectually by His Grace! If the householder in the parable had sent his servants to call these men, it is possible that *none* of them would have gone into the vineyard. But inasmuch as he came, himself, and spoke personally to them, they went at his bidding. And this I know, that I, poor creature that I am, may stand and speak with all my might, but I have no keys of human hearts at my belt. I may speak to the ear, but I can get no farther. But if my Lord shall come in all the splendor of His Omnipotent Grace, He shall not call in vain, for He has the keys of human hearts! "He opens, and no man shuts." And when He speaks effectually, men fly to Him like doves to their dovecotes. Oh, that it might be so with many here!

Thus I have answered the first question—How may the Lord be said to go out?

II. The second one is—WHAT IS THE HOUR HERE MENTIONED? "He went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace."

I have heard or read a good many sermons to the young, or I have heard *of* them, sermons to those who are called by God early in the morning. And I know there have been a great many sermons to those who have reached the 11th hour. So I thought that, in this discourse, I would specially address those who have come to the *third* hour. What kind of people are those who are at the third hour? What is the third hour? Let us calculate a little. To the Jews there were always 12 hours in the day, whether it was summertime or winter, so that the hour altered every day—a very difficult way of computing time, for, as the day lengthened or shortened, they still divided the daylight into 12 hours Well, dear Friends, think of human life as a period of 12 hours and then form a calculation of what each hour must be. Take the whole of life roughly at 70,

72, 73, 74, or 75, as you like. Then you have to leave out the very earliest hours—that period of life in which God does not call children to intelligent faith because they have not yet understanding enough to be capable of intelligent faith. Strike off a little for that and I should give the first three hours of life to be over at about 20, 21, 22, 23, or 24, if you please. And I should say that the third hour of life would range from 25 to thirty-five. That is the period in which the man has come to perfection and in which the woman has reached the fullness of her strength. There will be little growing after this—if not the zenith of life, yet certainly a considerably-developed period of life has now been reached. Very earnestly do I pray the Master to come out to you who have come to the third hour of your day and to say to you in the language of the text, "Go you, also, into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you."

Now, my Friend—between 20 and 40 years of age—I want you to become the servant of my Lord and Master, first, *because already you have wasted some of the best hours of the day.* There are no hours of the day like the early morning, when the dew is upon everything and the smoke of care and trouble has not yet dimmed the landscape. Give me for enjoyment the earliest hours of a summer's morning, when the birds are singing at their sweetest and all nature seems to be gemmed with her wedding jewels, her most delightful ornaments! There is no time for work like the first hours of the day and there is no time for serving the Lord like the very earliest days of youth. I recollect the joy I had in the little service I was able to render to God when first I knew Him. I was engaged in a school all the week, but there was Saturday afternoon—and that Saturday afternoon, though I might rightly have used it for rest—and though I was but a boy, myself, was given to a tract-district and to visiting the very poor within my reach. And the Sabbath was devoted to teaching a class, and later on, addressing the Sunday school. Oh, but how earnestly I did it all! I often think that I spoke better, then, than I did in later years, for I spoke so tremblingly that my heart went with it all!

And when I began to talk a little in the villages on Sunday and afterwards every night in the week, I know that I used to speak, then, what came fresh from my heart. There was little time for gathering much from books—my chief library was the Word of God and my own experience, but I spoke out from my very soul—no doubt with much blundering, much weakness and much youthful folly, but oh, with such an intense desire to bring men to Christ! I remember how I felt that I would cheerfully lay down my life if I might but save a poor old man, or bring a boy of my own age to the Savior's feet! There is nothing in later life quite like those early morning works! Yet, my Friend, you have let that period pass away. You are 25, you are 30, are you even 35 and still unsaved? Then, do not waste any more precious time! Go at once to the Crucified, my adorable Lord and Master! There He stands with a crown of thorns about His brow. Give Him, at least, the rest of your days and beg Him to pardon you for having lived so long without loving and serving Him.

Besides, I must plead with you at this age that you come to Christ *because already habits of idleness are forming upon you.* "No," you say, "it

is not so." I mean, *spiritual* idleness! You have not done anything yet for Christ! You have not even looked to see what you could do! You have not meditated upon what place in the vineyard you could occupy—whether you could trim the vines, or water them, or gather the grapes, or tread the wine vat. No, you have done *nothing* as yet and what I am afraid of is that soon you will get settled down into this do-nothing style—and you will go back to the dust from whence you sprang, having achieved nothing for Him who gave Himself that He might save us from our sins! Do not stay in that condition a moment longer! The wax is not very soft, now, it is beginning to harden. Before yet it has quite set, let the stamp of Sovereign Grace be pressed upon it that your life may yet bear the impress of Christ!

Moreover, *Satan is very ready with his temptations* and, you know, he always—

"Finds some mischief still,
For idle hands to do."

You have not gone into any gross open sin, I hope. Perhaps you have been kept, like the young man in the narrative we read, quite pure and clean outwardly. Well, but do you not see that—so good a fellow as you are in your own estimation—you are extremely likely to be assailed by Satan? And if he can get you to indulge the lusts of the flesh, or some other vain and sinful pleasure, he will take great delight in ruining you! Oh, how I wish that I could get you enlisted into my Lord's army! Here, take the shilling. I mean, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and accept Him as your Savior! Become His faithful servant! I wish I could put a hoe into your hands, or a pruning knife, or something with which you could be induced to go into the vineyard of my Master, to serve Him!

You who have reached 25, or 30, or 35, I want you to come to Christ *because your sun may go down at noon.* Such things do happen. This morning, as I looked over this congregation, I remembered an old friend who used to sit not far from here and who went to Heaven a few weeks ago. And there used to sit another child of God, a dear friend who went Home but a very little while ago. I will not now go in thought round the whole place, but I look upon it often with the remembrance of where they used to sit who are now with God. One after another has gone—some very old people, but among those who have been called away there have been many who were quite young. I should have expected that they would have been here, at *my* funeral and yours, but instead thereof, they have been carried to an early grave. With good hope, thank God, the most of them whom I remember—carried with gladness to their tomb because we knew that, through the Grace of God, they were ripe for Glory! But what if the call should come for you, dear Friend, before you have begun to serve your God? No, it must not be so, must it? Is there not something in your heart that seems to say, "By the Grace of God, it shall not be so! I will seek Jesus even now and give myself to Him who gave Himself for *me."*

For, once again, it seems to me that if God will spare you, there is *a fair opportunity of work yet before you.* As I look all round here at men and women in the prime of life and know that many of them are not yet

converted to God, I feel, dear Friends, that Satan must not have you and the world must not have you and sin must not have you, but Christ *must* have you. He is such a glorious Savior and Lord that I would gladly have all the world at His feet! He deserves so much that if all kings fell down before Him and all princes called Him blessed, He deserves it well! And, if you will do so, it shall be but right. What a life you may yet lead! What usefulness, what happiness, what blessedness may yet be your portion! If you could look through a telescope that could reveal what you might be if your heart were consecrated to God, what a Heaven below and what a Heaven above awaits you! I feel sure that you would now yield to the calling of the Great Householder and enter His vineyard before you left this building!

III. Now let me try to answer a third question. WHAT WERE THESE MEN DOING TO WHOM THE HOUSEHOLDER SPOKE? "Standing idle in the marketplace."

I shall not enlarge upon this point, but I must say a little about some who are standing idle. *In a literal sense, many are altogether idling.* There are, still, many Christian men and Christian women—no, I do not mean Christian men and Christian women, but those who *ought to be Christians*, who are really idle. Sometimes, when I have been by the seaside, at Mentone and elsewhere, I have seen a great many well-to-do folk who had nothing the matter with them. They were perfectly well, yet they were idling their time away day after day. And I have almost thought to myself, "If they were thrown into the Mediterranean, who would lose anything by them?" Are there not plenty of people just like that even among those who come to our places of worship? They consume so much bread and meat and if they are not careful, they will get consumed, one of these days, for they do no good to anybody!

What a pity it is that a man who stands nearly six feet in his shoes should be doing nothing and that a woman who is made for love and kindness should not be scattering that love and kindness on all sides and serving the Lord! To those of you who are of the ages from 30 to 40, who yet are idle, I wish to say, with all earnestness, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Come to Him by faith. Confess your idleness and all your other sins! Seek His Grace and mercy and then enter His vineyard and serve Him while you may."

There are also others *who are laboriously idle,* wearied with toils which accomplish nothing of real worth. The man who is spending all his life in his business, living simply to get money, has but trifling goals, for temporary objects engross him. He who lives for God, for Christ, for the good of men, lives for an objective worthy of an immortal being, but he who lives only for his own aggrandizement, lives for such a temporary and trifling objective that he may be said to be idle though he wears himself to death with his labor! Ah, Sir, if this is all you do, the Master thinks you are idle! You are doing nothing for Him, nothing worth the doing, nothing that can be written in the roll and record of history as a great feat done by a soul redeemed with the blood of Christ! O you laborious idlers, I pray that you may be made to go and work in the Master's vineyard!

There are *some who are idling because of their constant indecision.* They are not altogether bad, but they are not good. They do not serve the devil unless it is by neglecting to serve God. Though they are idle, they are full of good intentions—but so they have long been. If they were now what they resolved to be 10 years ago, there would be a great change in them. But no. And, apparently, in 10 years' time they will be as they are now. That is to say, if God spares them. They will get no farther, for they are of the sort that "resolve and re-resolve," and yet remain the same. I almost wish that they would say that they would be lost, sooner than say that they will be saved and yet not mean it, for, if they said that they would be lost, they would recoil from it with horror after having said it! But now they play with God, with eternity, Heaven and Hell, and say, "I will, I will, I will." And always it is, "I will," yet they never will to make that, "I will," a thing of the present moment. Sirs, if a house were on fire and you were in the upper story, it would be a pity to say, "I will escape, by-and-by, when the flames have reached another story, but I must wait a little while." No, you would be eager to escape at once, I am sure that you would! And wisdom dictates that a man should not always parley and say, "I will," and yet never come up to the mark. Wisdom dictates that, by the Grace of God, we should say, "I have reached the end of my indecision. I will begin to live for God, if He will give me spiritual life. I will cast off the works of darkness if God will give me spiritual light. I will lay myself at Jesus' feet and cry, 'Save me, O Lord, for I long to escape from my sin and to be an idler no longer!'"

IV. I will not say more upon that point, but go on to the next question—WHAT WORK WOULD THE LORD HAVE THESE IDLERS DO—

"Go you also into the vineyard."

One would think, from what you hear from some men, that the service of God was a very difficult, dreary, dismal, hard, toilsome business. But it is not so. *The work which the Lord would have us do is very proper and fit for us.* He would have us recognize that we are sinners and He, therefore, would have us come and be washed. And when we are washed, He would have us realize that it is our joy, our duty, our privilege, our delight, to show forth the praises of Him who has thus saved us. The service of God is the most fit employment for a man to be engaged in—it never degrades him, it never wearies him, for in the service of God we gain fresh strength. And the more we serve Him, the more we can serve Him.

Beloved Friends, the Lord invites you to *a service in which He will give you all the tools and all the strength you need.* When He sends you to His vineyard, He does not expect you to go home to fetch a basket of tools. God does not expect sinners to find their own Savior and He never sends His soldiers on a warfare at their own charges. He who yields himself up to be a servant of God shall find himself singularly prepared and specially helped to do all that God asks him to do.

More than that, if you will come into God's vineyard, dear Friend, *you shall work with God and so be ennobled.* That seems to me the most wonderful thing about our service, that we are "workers together with God." To bend the tendril of that vine and find an almighty hand softly

working with our own—to take the sharp pruning knife and cut off the too-luxuriant branch and feel that there is a knife sharper than ours cutting as we cut—to take a spade and dig about the vine, and all the while to feel and know that there is a secret Worker digging deeper than we are digging and so making what we do effectual! Happy men who thus have their God working with them! Beloved, if you are building for God and you lift the trowel, or the hammer and feel that there is another hand lifting another trowel and another hammer—building with you and building by you—you are divinely honored! You are of the nobility of Heaven if God works with you and it is to that position He invites you when He says, "Go you also into the vineyard."

Young men of 25, or 30, let me tell you that *if you engage in this work, it shall be growingly pleasant to you.* The little difficulties at the commencement shall soon be gone. The service of God may seem, at first, like swimming against the stream, but afterwards you shall discover that there is a pleasure, even, in the opposing element, for the live fish always prefers to swim up the stream. You shall find a delight in your difficulties, a sacred joy in that which seems at first so arduous to you and, as you live and labor for your Lord, it shall become joy upon joy to serve Him and glorify His holy name!

And, dear Friends, *this work shall be graciously rewarded at the last.* The Lord will give you, according to His Grace, a reward here and a reward hereafter! Not of debt, mark you—I am preaching no legal sermon, asking the young man to work that he may *win* Heaven thereby, but I ask you, first, to believe in Jesus and so to become the servants of the living God, and then out of gratitude, to spend yourselves and to be spent for Him. If you do so, verily, I say unto you, you shall not lack a reward either here or hereafter!

I will close when I have reminded you that though I have been speaking to men who have reached the third hour—from 25 to thirty-five—we must remember that the householder went out, again, at the sixth hour—say, 35 to forty-five. He called those whom he found then and when he called them, they went into the vineyard. You men who are between 35 and 50, in the very strength of your days, Christ will not refuse to employ you if you will come at His call!

Then the householder went out again at the ninth hour, say, fifty, fifty-five, sixty—or farther on, sixty-five. It was getting late, but still they could do a good stroke of work if they threw all their energies into it. No man needs despair of doing a life-work even now. If you cannot do long work, you can do strong work. There are some men who begin work very late, but they go at it with such vigor and earnestness that they get through a good deal. I do not see why you should not, at any rate, come in now! Old men have done great things in the past—if they have not the vivacity of youth, they have more wisdom. If they have not all the strength, they have more prudence. There is a place for you to fill, my good Brother and Sister, though so many years have flown over your head. If you come to Christ even now, He will use you in His vineyard.

Ah, but, best of all, the householder went out even at the eleventh hour! He might have said, "It is of no use to go out *now*, for if I bring

them in, there is only one hour left for them to work." Still, as I have told you, it was not because *he* needed men, but because *they* needed the money, that he employed them. So, to show that he did not need them at the first hour and did not need them at the third, or the sixth, or the ninth hour, much less could he need them at the eleventh hour, yet he would still go out! There they are! I see them—they are a pack of old men and old women. You would not engage them, I am sure. You would say, "They will take half their time talking and the other half wiping the sweat from their brows—and do nothing! There is not any strength left in the poor old souls—they had better have an almshouse, a basin of gruel and sit by the fireside."

But this good householder's engagement of the men was not for his own sake, *but for their sakes*. He felt that he might as well engage these as he had done the rest, so he said to them, "Here, it is the eleventh hour, but go and work in my vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you." I feel it a great joy to have been called to work for my Lord in the early hours of my life's day. And I hope, by-and-by, to be able to say, "O God, You have taught me from my youth and up to now I have declared Your wondrous works. Now, also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not until I have showed Your strength unto this generation and Your power to everyone that is to come." I do not think my Lord will turn His old servant out. When I get old, you may become tired of me, but He will not! He will hear my prayers—

"Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord."

It is the best and the happiest thing of all, if we have served our Lord from our youth, but dear aged Friend, if you have missed that privilege, to your own grief and sorrow, if you are now an old man unsaved, or an old woman unsaved, yet even now the Lord invites you! He calls you! He bids you come and welcome! And if you do but come to Him, He will give you your penny, too, even as He gives it to those who have begun their working day so early!

If I remember rightly, there was a man who was converted at the age of 103. He was sitting under a hedge, I think in Virginia, and he remembered a sermon that he had heard Mr. Flavel preach at Plymouth. And recalling a striking part of it, he turned to God and found peace and pardon. He was spared to live three more years and when he died, this inscription was put over his grave, "Here lies a babe in Grace, aged three years, who died, according to nature, aged 106." Do you remember that venerable friend who was baptized here about six months ago? Dear old man, I had often seen him in distress of mind, oh, so sorrowful! I must confess that I sometimes avoided going where he was because I could not cheer him up, and he was rather inclined to pull one down to his own level, he was so sad—a dear good soul and a true child of God, but always doubting his evidences. One day, when I sat to see enquirers, he came. He said that he wished to be baptized that he might confess his faith in Christ. He was not sure that he was a child of God, but he knew that he had no hope but in the precious blood of Christ.

He was a very old man. Did I think that he was too old? No, I did not. Bless him! I was glad to see him. He was baptized at 86 and that day he

was so happy! Those who knew him never saw him so joyful. He was trusting in the precious blood and he had obeyed his Master's command. He had about three months of the days of Heaven upon earth in which, if you saw the old man, you must have noticed how bright he was. He walked with God and then he went Home. We had not our old member long, had we? No, but there sits in this place, if she has been able to get here, tonight, a Sister who joined this Church when she was about sixteen, and she has been a member 76 years and is still among us! Think of the difference between these two—one makes a confession of faith for 76 years, and another for only two or three months! Yet they shall both receive their penny! I am sure we do not grudge the penny to the Brother who came in at eighty-six. We are glad that he should have the full tale of blessing here and hereafter. Still, dear Friends, do not wait as long as he did. And if you have waited until now, make haste and get to Christ at once! May His Holy Spirit lead you and guide you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
MATTHEW 19:13-30; 20:1-16.

All sorts of persons are invited to come to Christ, whatever their age may be. We begin here with the children.

Matthew 19:13-15. *Then were there brought unto Him little children, that He should put His hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto Me: for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. And He laid His hands on them, and departed there.* The principal difficulty of children in coming to Christ frequently lies in their friends. Their parents or their other relatives think they are too young, and discourage them. Oh, that we all had a right idea of the possibility of the conversion of little children! No, not only of the possibility, but that we *looked* for it, *watched* for it and *encouraged* young children to come to Christ! You know that in the parable I am going to read presently, we are told that the householder "went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard." What a privilege it is to be brought to Christ early in the morning—that is, while we are yet children.

16. *And, behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?* This was not a child, but a young man, who had come to riper years.

17-20. *And He said unto him, Why do you call Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God: but if you will enter into life, keep the Commandments. He said unto Him, Which? Jesus said, You shall do no murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness, honor your father and your mother and, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The young man said unto Him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?* Externally, in the letter, very likely this young man had kept these Commandments and, so far he was to be commended, yet internally, in their spirit, he had not kept one of them. Our Savior did not tell him that he had failed, but He took him on

his own ground. "You say that you love your neighbor as yourself; I will give you a test to prove whether you do."

21, 22. *Jesus said to him, If you will be perfect, go and sell that you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in Heaven: and come and follow Me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.* See, then, that often with men—with young men—the great hindrance in coming to Christ may be the world. They may have riches, or they may have a great craving for riches—and this may stand in the way of their coming to the Savior. If any man loves riches better than he loves Christ, he cannot be saved!

23, 24. *Then said Jesus unto His disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.* Somehow or other—

"Gold and the Gospel seldom agree,
Religion always sides with poverty"

because a man's possessions are so liable to get into his heart. He is apt to turn them into idols and to make devotion to them the great objective of his life. As long as he does so, he cannot be saved.

25-27. *When His disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who, then, can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed you; what shall we have, therefore?* Always too fast is this impetuous Peter; ever ready to put in a good word for himself if he can.

28, 29. *And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That you which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the Throne of His Glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone that has forsaken houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.* He shall find himself a gainer by his losses for Christ's sake! If he has lost friends, he shall find better and truer friends in the Church of God. If he has lost possessions, he shall get a *spiritual* wealth that shall be better to him than houses and lands.

30. *But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.*

Matthew 20:1, 2. *For the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.* That was the usual wage of the time, the daily pay of a Roman soldier.

3, 4. *And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; go you also into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you. And they went their way.* You notice that the first laborers made a bargain with the householder. He agreed with them for a penny a day and then sent them into his vineyard. So our Lord seemed to say to Peter, "If you are going to make a bargain concerning your service, you will not find it pays. You are saying, 'We have forsaken all, and followed You; what shall we have, therefore?'" That

spirit will not do! Christ is not to be served by hirelings! The moment the idea comes in that we *deserve* to have anything at His hands, we spoil all our service and those who might be first come to be last if they once get that notion into their heads. This parable shows that it is so.

5-9. *Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and said unto them, Why stand you here all the day idle? They said unto him, Because no man has hired us. He said unto them, Go you also into the vineyard; and whatever is right, that shall you receive. So when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard said unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.* This was the gift of Grace, through the generosity of the employer.

10-12. *But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, These last have worked but one hour, and you have made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.* They put forth their claim on the ground of *deserving*, so they had what they had bargained for, but they had no more. They were engaged first, but because they had the hireling spirit they were put last.

13-15. *But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do you no wrong: did not you agree with me for a penny? Take that what is yours and go your way: I will give unto this last, even as unto you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Is your eye evil, because I am good?* God will have us know that in dealing with us when we are His servants, He is under no obligation to us. If He chooses to give a reward, the reward is not of debt, but of His Sovereign Grace. We are bound to serve Him by the fact that He is our Creator, altogether apart from any reward, and we must not talk of dealing with Him on terms of reward! It is too high a style for us, poor worms, to assume in the Presence of Almighty God! It we talk so, He will soon put us down into our right place.

16. *So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many are called, but few chosen.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—201, 508, 538.

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

A SAD INTERIOR AND A CHEERY MESSENGER
NO. 2518

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 23, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTTOBER. 18, 1885.

"And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept."
Mark 16:10.

Some of you, dear Friends, have seen those small pictures by famous Dutch artists where, with many little touches—very lifelike, very suggestive, very homely—they depict an interior. Now Mark is that kind of painter. He delights to give us interiors. He is best pleased when he can record something which nobody else seems to have described, or when he can take a description by somebody else and fill in the details, the finishing touches that have been omitted. I do not remember that we are told by Matthew, or Luke, or John, how the disciples behaved themselves while their Lord was in the grave. It is left to us to imagine their feelings, with this exception—that Mark tells us that "they mourned and wept."

Remember, this was on the morning of the third day after our Lord's death. They had had the Jewish Sabbath for quiet reflection and, no doubt, for lamentation and mourning. But this is the morning of our own Lord's-Day, the first day of the week, and when Mary Magdalene comes into the room, she tells them that she has seen the risen Lord! And what is the scene which is presented to her eyes? In two or three words, Mark stipples it in thus, "as they mourned and wept." They were mainly men, I suppose. If Mary came only to the eleven, they were all men, yet this is how they are occupied—"They mourned and wept." We know most of them. We have read so much of them and they stand out in such clear light—these early leaders of the Church of Christ, these first few chosen men—that I seem to be almost able to see them all in my imagination just now. They were not grouped around a table as they are in that celebrated picture of the Last Supper, but sitting together in the room and not able to restrain their emotions. They are all mourning, and most of them are expressing those emotions in a way not usual to men. "They mourned and wept."

There were sighs, cries and salt tears. It was a scene of sad sorrow which Mary came in upon. You can almost picture her as she stands at the door with her hand upon the latch. She pauses a moment before she can communicate the news—they are so unhappy, they are so broken down, it is such a funeral gathering—that she can scarcely find her tongue! At last she breaks out, "Christ has risen! I have seen Him! He

has risen from the dead! Cease your mourning. An angel has descended from Heaven and has spoken to me and said, 'He is not here: for He is risen, as He said.'" After she has delivered her message, she stands still, almost petrified, because she finds herself not believed. Perhaps nobody speaks. It may be no one says, "Mary Magdalene, you are mad! We do not believe you!" They weep on. They look around as much as to ask one another, "Do you believe it?" And each one seems to say, "I do not believe it. myself," and their eyes give themselves again to their copious weeping—and their hearts yield themselves, still, to their perpetual mourning. "She went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept."

I want, at this time, to speak first about *the sorrowing assembly*—that mourning and weeping band of disciples to whom Mary came. Then I will say something about *the consoling messenger* whose message ought to have transformed that mourning and weeping into the opposite, namely, into joy and gladness. And, in the last place, I will tell you of *the reassuring reflection* that I see in this narrative.

I. First, let me take you to this interior which Mark has so beautifully painted, and bid you look at the sorrowing assembly. "She went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept."

What made them weep? What makes men weep about the death of Christ? It does make them weep—we are not all turned to stone, we are not all brutish. There are times with some of us—we wish they were more frequent—when the Cross of Christ seems to touch our inmost heart and makes the rock that lies within our nature stream with living floods of tears. Why do we mourn over Christ crucified?

First, *because, like these disciples, we have some faith in Him.* They had been with Him and they had been with Him because they had believed in Him. They had so believed in Him that they had left all and followed Him and been subjected to reproach for His dear sake. They had heard Him preach and the power of His teaching had won their hearts. They believed that He was the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, the Deliverer of men! Yet now He was dead and the very fact that they had believed made them feel intense sorrow of heart as they looked back upon what He had been to them. If they had had no faith in Him, they would have said, "He was an impostor and He is put away. That is the end of Him and it is always a blessing when an impostor, at last, comes to his end." But because they had believed in Him, therefore they sorrowed to think that He was gone.

You and I, dear Friends, who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ at this present moment, cannot, without deep sorrow think of Him as dead. When once we have vividly realized that the Son of God died upon the Cross, and mark how He died in utter and extreme anguish, we cannot but grieve. We ask, "Why should He die? Why should He thus be put to death?" And we begin to cry and sorrow because of this great crime of crimes. O You Christ of God, were You despised and rejected of men? O You Lover of men, were You hated and cast out, and crucified? O You who came to save the guilty, did man put You to death?—

"Alas, and did my Savior bleed?

And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?"

In proportion as we believe in Him, we feel that we would melt away in tears of grief to think that He should die. Shall such brightness be eclipsed? Shall such glory be dishonored? Shall such immortality be dragged down to the gates of death? We cannot but mourn that Christ should die—and if we dwell upon that thought we shall get into that vein in which the disciples were when they mourned and wept.

No doubt they mourned and wept, principally, *because they loved Him and, therefore, lamented for His loss.* Was Christ really gone? "Alas," they said, "our Head is taken from us, our Master and our Lord, our perfect Teacher, our complete Example, our blessed Friend, our tender Comforter." They had lost more than she who loses her husband, or than he who has lost his spouse, or than the child that is bereaved of its mother. They had lost "every precious name in one." And, Brothers and Sisters, if we were to always think of Christ as dead. If we were so unwise as to forget that He always *lives*, it would seem, indeed, to be the greatest loss that Heaven or earth could sustain, for the Son of God thus to be put to death! As it is, we love Him so that we cannot think of His being put away from the sons of men—being rejected by them and put to death by them—without feeling our hearts breaking that He should suffer so! Love to Him and our valuation of Him go to deepen the tides of our grief.

And the more is this the case *when we think of the sorrows He endured.* I fancy that I hear John saying across the table, "And I saw them pierce His side and forthwith there came out blood and water." And I hear James say, "And I saw them offer Him vinegar." And I hear Peter say, "And I saw them scourge Him." And I hear Bartholomew say, "And I heard from the distance His cry, 'I thirst.'" And then they would break into a chorus of weeping again. It was not only that He was gone and that they had lost Him, but that He had died in such a way as He did. They could not, without tears, contemplate His being put to the death of a felon in such extreme agony, deserted of the Father and crying, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" without saying to themselves, "How could it be? This is an affliction that cannot be borne, a deep sorrow that cannot be fathomed, that He should die, and die so!" I do admit I have sometimes felt within myself as if I would have stopped His dying if I could. What? Has He died to save *my* soul? The ransom price is altogether too great!

Have you never heard of the two brothers, one of whom must die? Each was eager to suffer instead of his brother and they contended with each other—as though they were rivals in love with death—which should die that the other might live. And, sometimes, when love is strong upon us, we seem to say to the great Master, "It were better that I should die and perish than that You should be nailed to the Cross." He never left it to our choice! He bought us with His precious blood before we had an opportunity to debate with Him in a discussion of love! He bore our sins in His own body on the tree and gave that matchless unequalled life that

He might redeem you and me from going down into the Pit. We cannot think of His suffering and grief without mourning and weeping.

Then, dear Friends, I should think that the eleven, as they sat together, must have mourned and wept as *they thought of how they had treated this dear Lord of theirs.* If even a friend dies and we have ever been unkind to that friend, how our unkindness comes home to us when it is too late to atone for it! An undutiful son, when his mother dies, must feel a sore fretting of heart to think of his unkindness. But what must these disciples have felt as they remembered how they had treated their blessed Lord? They said to one another, "Oh, how we must have grieved Him when we disputed among ourselves which of us should be the greatest, while He was talking about being delivered into the hands of wicked men, and being scourged, and put to death upon the Cross!" "Hold your tongues, all of you," cries poor Peter, "say nothing, for it is I who deserted Him and denied Him. With oaths and curses I denied that I even knew Him." And when Peter wept, they would all weep, I am sure, as each would say, "But, Brother Peter, we all forsook Him and fled."

"I," says John, "was asleep in the garden that night when He said, 'Could you not watch with Me one hour?'" And each one would be willing to confess his own wrong-doing towards the Blessed One and all together would say, "Why did we not rally around Him? Why did we not stay with Him when they took Him away and bound Him, and scourged Him? Why did we not bare our shoulders and put ourselves between the Roman lictors and His blessed flesh? At least, why did we not stand around the Cross and whisper comfort if we could not help Him, and quote, at least, some promises of the Father to Him, or remind Him that there were some who loved Him even if others were jibing and jeering at Him?" Then they wept and mourned afresh.

And when you and I think of the death of Christ, must we not feel much the same as these disciples did?—

"'Twas You, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were!
Each of my crimes became a nail
And unbelief the spear."

It was our sins that drew the vengeance down upon His guiltless head, yet we have not treated Him as we ought to have treated Him, for even we who have known Him longest and who have loved Him best—what poor friends we have been to Him! He shows His wounds again to our penitent gaze and He says, "These are the wounds which I received in the house of My friends." Oh, how little have we given to Him, how little have we done for Him, how few hours have we spent with Him in solitude, how feeble have been our testimonies for Him, how slack our prayers for His coming and for the triumph of His Kingdom! I, for one, feel ashamed, and say—

"W***ell might the sun in darkness hide,***
And shut its glories in,
When God, the mighty Maker died
For man, the creature's sin.
Thus might I hide my blushing face
While His dear Cross appears,
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,
And melt my eyes to tears."

I cannot keep on with this sorrowful subject. That terrible passion of our Master is enough to wring the last drop of grief out of our hearts. If we could once get into true sympathy with it, it would be, tonight, in this Tabernacle as it was in that upper room at Jerusalem—we would be mourning and weeping because our Lord was dead. I had many things to say to you upon this sacred theme, but if you could bear to hear them, I cannot bear to speak them.

II. So, I prefer to ask you to look at THE CONSOLING MESSENGER who came to the disciples and said, concerning their Lord and ours, "He is not dead: He is risen!"

It is very important that we should have right views concerning the resurrection as well as the death of our Lord. If I go down my garden, early tomorrow morning, with my spirit drooping and disconsolate, and say to myself, "Alas, the world is in a very bad state and the Church is almost as bad as the world! Everything is going wrong, everything is wretched, sad and miserable." Why, even the very birds might begin to say, "What is that man doing? He is out of tune with us." And if I look at the flowers, surely they, also, might well begin to chide me and say, "Master, what are you doing?" But if I go forth with many burdens and many cares all cast upon the Lord, and with all the outlook, dreary as it is, still say, "The Lord lives, and blessed be my Rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted!" then surely the mountains and the hills shall break forth before me into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands! God means His people to rejoice, and the world, wilderness as it is, is to rejoice with them! "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." God fill your souls with sunlight, all of you who are His people! If there is any Truth of God that can flood our souls with joy, surely it is contained in the cheering message which Mary brought to the weeping disciples!

You and I, Beloved, by our sins, slew the Christ of God! He died the accursed death of the Cross, but He is not dead! He is not dead now! Some professing Christians go through a kind of practical charade of the life of Christ, acting it all over again throughout what they call the Holy Year. And then they must necessarily have the "three hours' agony" on what they call, "Good Friday." Well, now, if I believed that Christ died on Good Friday, I would celebrate it with joy from the first dawn of the morning to the setting of the sun at night! It seems to me that there is much of unbelief, after all, at the back of any attempt to go, even in imagination, through the three hours' agony—the agony that was endured once and for all by Him who said, "It is finished." If it were *not* finished, I would help to go through it, but if it is finished, what have I to do with it but to rejoice in the sweet fruit of it and triumph and be glad that He is not here, for He is risen and gone into the Glory of the Father? That message of Mary Magdalene has changed the whole aspect of affairs, and though we have wept and mourned, now we will begin to rejoice!

What did Mary say? *She came with the best of news,* for she said, "I have seen our risen Lord! First I saw an angel and he told me that Christ was not there, for He was risen. And I ran to tell you that good tidings

and on the road I saw *Him.* I did not know Him at first, but He called me, 'Mary,' and I said to Him, 'Rabboni,' and I tried to touch Him, but He said, 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.' I am sure that it was none other than the Christ. I am not deceived, for the tones of His voice are well known to me. I am an eyewitness that He is risen, for I saw Him and I heard Him."

Brothers and Sisters, that our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead is a great fact of history, testified by eye-witnesses—hundreds of faithful men and women saw Him after He rose from the dead! They could not have been deceived—they knew Him too well. They were not impostors, for they lost everything by the witness that they bore. Many of them died in consequence of bearing this witness, but they could not help it. They were so sure that they had seen Him, that they told it though they died for it! Yes, Beloved, the Lord Christ, whom you and I slew by our sins, is risen from the dead! He is not on the Cross, He is not in the grave! It is true that He is not here in bodily Presence, for He has gone up on high. A cloud has received Him, but He still lives. He lives triumphant in the skies at His Father's right hand! Let that Truth of God be the great joy and comfort of our hearts as we believe it.

Let us also, like Mary, tell the glad news to others as often as suitable occasions arise. This is an age of infidelity and we are very glad of any arguments that are used to prove the Inspiration of Scripture and the truth of its teaching, but, after all, the defense of the external bulwarks of the city of Truth is but a poor affair. The real defense is from within, where men can speak of what they know and testify what they have seen. Do not merely say to your children and neighbors, "Christ is risen," but tell them what He has done for you! Tell what a gracious influence His death and resurrection have had upon your own heart to renew you, to comfort you, to guide you, to make you "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." There is no getting over personal evidence. One eye-witness is better than 20 ear-witnesses. Men will believe what you have seen if they do not believe what you have heard. Be not slow, therefore, to bear your witness, for, "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness" and who, Himself, has said, "You are My witnesses." If the risen Christ has been revealed to you, be sure to testify concerning Him as you have opportunity.

But, alas, *at first, the disciples did not believe the good news.* They had the common and sad failing of unbelief upon them and they dishonored the King's messenger by doubting her word. Worse still, they dishonored their Lord and Master by doubting His assurance when He told them that the third day He would rise again from the dead. Let us not doubt the great Truth of God that He is risen. Dear Friends, Mary Magdalene fell asleep 1,800 years ago, but her testimony is as true today as it was that first Lord's-Day morning, for the Truth of God is always true! And those hundreds of people who saw Christ after His resurrection, just as certainly saw Him as if they had seen Him only yesterday, for if they saw Him 1,800 years ago, it was a fact—and a fact is as much a fact after two

thousand years as it was at the first! Christ is risen! We must believe this glorious fact! If we do believe it, what then?

In the first place, the sin of Christ's murder is condoned. All that sin of ours which occasioned His death is condoned. If He has risen from the dead, He has forgiven us the sin of putting Him to death! Let your penitent spirits rejoice that the evil which you thought to do Him has been turned to good account. He is no longer dead—neither are you condemned to die if you believe in Him, nor shall you be forever and forever—

"'The Lord is risen indeed!'
The grave has lost its prey.
With Him is risen the ransomed seed,
To reign in endless day."

Listen. Inasmuch as Christ rose from the dead, all the sins of those who trust Him are put away. You have often heard me explain this wondrous story, how Christ became the Surety for His people and how He paid their debt, otherwise it should not be all paid. He was kept in the prison house of the tomb till a full search had been made and it was proved that He had suffered the whole penalty, and that the debt of His people was paid. To do this leisurely, three days and nights were spent, and when, in Heaven's high court, it was declared that the Messiah had finished transgression and made an end of sin, "Go, Gabriel," said the Father. And like a flash of flame the angel descended, bearing the warrant that the debt was paid and that the Surety must go free! There He lay, sleeping that grand sleep of death for us! When He woke, He unwound the napkin and the grave clothes, and laid the napkin in one place and the grave clothes in another, for He was in no hurry. He folded them up and laid each in its proper place and then, when all was quite finished, He, in the splendor of His resurrection life, went to the open doorway where stood His servant who had opened the gate for his Lord—and out He came in the majesty of His resurrection body! He was risen from the dead and in that moment God set His seal to the clearance of every soul for whom Christ was the Substitute! All of us who believe in Christ may know for sure that He died for our sins and that He was raised, again, for our justification, that is, for our clearance.

As the Cross paid the debt, resurrection took the bond and tore it in pieces. And now there is nothing standing in the records of eternity against any soul that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ! His rising from the dead has made us clear from every charge. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again." That rising again has cleared us from all the sins that can ever be laid to our charge!

Nor is that all. Those poor disciples thought, when Jesus died, and remained awhile in the tomb, that all was over with His Kingdom. The King was dead and so far as they could see, there was no one to occupy the vacant throne. He had taken the scepter of Sovereignty in His hand and ruled mankind in love—but that scepter had dropped from His dead fingers. He had preached righteousness in the great congregation, but His powerful voice was silent. But when they knew that Christ was risen, they understood that His resurrection meant a living King and a trium-

phant cause, and that the Truth of God would conquer and righteousness rule—and that the race of mankind should not go down into perdition! O dear Friends, dry up your tears! While you think of how your Lord died, you may well let them flow, but, as He lives, and reigns, there is now no cause for sorrow! Tell it out among the nations that the Lord has risen from the dead, and by His rising He has brought to all His people life, light, joy, hope, purity and everlasting redemption!

III. Finally, Beloved, there is, in this resurrection of Christ from the dead, A REASSURING REFLECTION to all who believe in Him.

It should relieve our worst grief to know that *Christ was the Representative of His people.* When He died, we who believe died in Him. And when He rose again, we rose in Him. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Therefore, if you believe in Jesus, have no fear of death! Dread it not for yourselves and lament it not for those who have already fallen asleep in Christ. It seems to us a very painful thought that this poor body, which has been the companion of our souls so long, must gradually grow feeble and worn out—its senses by degrees ceasing to assist the mind and the whole fabric, at length, decaying and turning to a handful of dust—lying moldering beneath yonder dark grass in the cemetery far away from the place where it was known to work and live. Ah, but, concerning even this mortal body, we have good news, for He who died and rose again, did not merely live as to His soul, but He lived as to His body, too! When His disciples "were terrified and frightened and supposed that they had seen a spirit," He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have." Then He took a piece of broiled fish and a honeycomb, and did eat before them, to let them see that it was His corporeal Self, His very body that died upon the Cross, that was alive again! Every Believer can say with Job, "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." Therefore is there no fear of death for us—for sin—the sting of death, is taken away and we can cry even to the last enemy, "O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?"

And, further, Christ being the Representative of His people, *they, also, shall live again.* When our Lord Jesus said to Martha, "Your brother shall rise again," she answered, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." You may say the same concerning your brother, or father, or mother, or child, or sister, or husband, or wife! They who have fallen asleep in Jesus have only gone over into the better country where we will follow them in the Lord's good time. We will not sit and mourn and weep, for the woman stands with her hand on the door and she looks at us while we are mourning and weeping, and she says, "Christ is risen! I saw Him in His resurrection glory." To me, the very hinge of the Gospel is the resurrection of Christ. Whenever I get to doubting, I always fall back on that great Truth of God—He did rise from the dead! The disciples saw Him. The best witnesses that could be found saw Him, heard Him, touched Him. He did rise from the dead! Then there is a

future state, there is a resurrection! I am in Christ, I am trusting in Him, I shall rise and I shall live in Him. He has said, "Because I live, you shall live also," so I shall live and, with the Psalmist, I can say, "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices: my flesh also shall rest in hope." Though my body shall see corruption, yet it shall be raised in glory, and power, and incorruption, like that risen body of my Lord!

There is the Gospel. Perhaps some of you will say, "We do not understand that to be the Gospel," but it is. This is the Gospel—that Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He rose from the dead the third day, and that whoever believes in Him has everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation.

My dear unconverted Hearers, do you think that our Sabbaths are mere days of sport, and that when we get to our congregations, we do it just to while away the time? If so, you think very unworthily of high and holy things! No, Sirs, preaching the Gospel is to us a matter of life and death! We throw our whole soul into it. We live and are happy if you believe in Jesus and are saved! And we are almost ready to die if you refuse the Gospel of Christ. Do not let any preacher be to you what Ezekiel was to the people of the age in which he prophesied. The Lord said to him, "You are unto them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument, for they hear your words, but they do them not." Oh, that the Spirit of God would come to close grips with you and make you feel that the Lord's message is not sent to be criticized, but to be accepted and obeyed! God grant it, for His mercy's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 28.

Verse 1. *In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.* While the Jewish Sabbath lasted, they paid to it due respect. They did not even go to the sepulcher to perform the kindly offices of embalmment. But when the old Sabbath was dying away and the new and better Sabbath began to dawn, these holy women found their way back to their Lord's tomb. Woman must be first at the sepulcher as she was last at the Cross. We may well forget that she was first in the transgression—the honor which Christ put upon her took away that shame! Who but Mary Magdalene could be the first at the tomb? Out of her, Christ had cast seven devils, and now she acts as if into her He had sent seven angels. She had received so much Grace that she was full of love to her Lord. "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher." You can just see them in the gray light of the dawn. It is not clear enough to make out their form and shape, but in the twilight they are coming into the garden and finding their way to the new sepulcher.

2. *And, behold, there was a great earthquake.*—The women must have wondered as they felt that tremor beneath their feet. If you have ever felt an earthquake, you will never forget it. And this was a great one, not one

of an ordinary kind—"a great earthquake." Death was being heaved up and all the bars of the sepulcher were beginning to burst. When the King awoke from the sleep of death, He shook the world! The bedchamber in which He rested for a little while trembled as the heavenly Hero arose from His bed—"Behold, there was a great earthquake." Nor was the King unattended in His rising.

2. *For the angel of the Lord.*— It was not merely one of the angelic host, but some mighty presence angel—"the angel of the Lord."

2. *Descended from Heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.* Jesus was put in the prison of the tomb as a hostage for His people. Therefore He must not break out by Himself, but the angelic sheriff's officer must bring the warrant for His deliverance, and set the captive at liberty. He was imprisoned because of human debt, but the debt is paid, so He must go free. Like a flash of fire, the angel descends from the right hand of God! He stands at the mouth of the tomb. He touches the great stone, sealed as it was, and guarded by the soldiers—and it rolls back! And when he has rolled back the stone from the door, he sits upon it, as if to defy earth and Hell ever to roll it back again! That great stone seems to represent the sin of all Christ's people, which shut them up in prison! It can never again be laid over the mouth of the sepulcher of any child of God. Christ has risen and all His saints must rise, too! The angel "rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it." I think I see there one of the grandest sights that ever man beheld, for one greater than an earthly king is sitting on something better than a throne!

3. *His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.* Dazzling in its purity, like the raiment worn by Christ upon the Mount of Transfiguration, whiter than any fuller can make it!

4. *And for fear of him, the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.* First a palsy of fear and then a stiffening of fright fell upon them, for they had never seen such a sight as this before. They were Roman soldier, who knew nothing of the meaning of cowardice—yet at the sight of this messenger of God, "the keepers did shake, and became as dead men."

5. *And the angel answered and said unto the women.*—We had almost forgotten them! We had been thinking of the earthquake and the angel, and the flaming lightning, and the frightened soldiers. But this angel's thought is all about the women. He whose countenance was like lightning and whose garments were white as snow, said to the women.—

5-7. *Fear you not, for I know that you seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead.* Notice the angel's words. First, "See," and then, "Go." You cannot tell the message till you know it. You who would serve God must first be instructed yourselves. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." And then, "Go quickly." If you have seen, then go. Do not sit down and admire the sight, and forget the thousands who have never seen it! But come, see the place where the Lord lay, and then go and, "go quickly."

7. *Behold, He goes before you into Galilee; there shall you see Him: lo, I have told you.* That is a very beautiful touch of condescension on the Savior's part—that He would go before His disciples into Galilee. Why, Galilee was the very opposite of a classic region—it was a district that was much despised! The clod-hoppers, the boors, the illiterate people of no account lived in "Galilee of the Gentiles." "Yet," says Christ, "I will meet you there." It was the King's own rendezvous—*not in the* courts of earthly monarchs, nor in the palaces of the priests, but away down in Galilee! What cares He for the grandeur of men and their empty pomp and boasted wisdom? He goes to places that are despised, that He may lift them up by the glory of His light! "Behold, He goes before you into Galilee; there shall you see Him: lo, I have told you."

8. *And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy.* That seems a strange mixture, "fear and great joy." Yet there was plenty of reason for both emotions! Who would not fear that had felt an earthquake and seen an angel, and marked the tomb broken open? Yet who would not rejoice that had had such a cheering message and such an assurance that the crucified Christ had risen from the dead? Experience is the best explanation of experience! You must feel for yourself these two emotions working together before you can understand how they can live in anyone at the same time. "They departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy."

8. *And did run to bring His disciples word.* Good women! "They did run." These staid matrons did run and who would not run to tell of a risen Lord?

9. *And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them.*— Happy are the ministers who meet their Lord when they are going up the pulpit stairs! Blessed are the teachers who meet Jesus when they are going to the class! They will be sure to preach and teach well when that is the case. "As they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them."

9. *Saying, all hail. And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him.* These holy women were not Unitarians! Knowing that Jesus was the Son of God, they had no hesitation in worshipping Him. Perhaps these timid souls clung to their Lord through fear that He might be again taken from them. So, "they held Him by the feet, and *worshipped Him."* Fear and faith striving within them for the mastery.

10. *Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell My Brethren to go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me.* Note how Jesus dwells upon this despised district of Galilee. I should like to dwell upon it, too. He said nothing about classic Corinth, or imperial Rome, or proud Jerusalem! His message is," Tell my Brethren to go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me." If we will be humble. If we will cast aside the pride of life, there shall we meet Him who is meek and lowly of heart!

11-13. *Now when they were going, behold, some of the guards came into the city, and reported unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large sums of money to the soldiers, saying, Say you, His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept.* You must often have noticed what a mixture of falsehood this was. "You were

asleep. Are you sure that you were asleep?" "Yes." "Yet you say that the disciples came—you knew they were the disciples though you were asleep? And they stole Him away? You know how they did it? You can describe the stealthy way in which they took away the body of Jesus? You were the witnesses of it, although you were sound asleep all the while?" Go, Sirs, it is worse than trifling to listen to the lying of a witness who begins by swearing that he was fast asleep all the time! Yet this was the tale that the soldiers were bribed to tell. And many a worse lie than this has been told to try to put the Truth of God out of countenance. The modern philosophy which is thrust forward to cast a slur upon the great Truths of Revelation is no more worthy of credence than this lie put into the mouths of the soldiers! Yet common report gives it currency and among a certain clique it pays. But the soldiers naturally said, "We shall be put to death for sleeping while on duty." So the chief priests said.

14. *And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.* "We can give some more of those arguments that have been so telling in your hands—and they will prevail with the governor as they have prevailed with you."

15. *So they took the money and did as they were told.*—Plenty still do this and I have no doubt they will continue to do so as long as the world is what it is. "They took the money and did as they were told."

15-17. *And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him: but some doubted.* Where will not Mr. Doubting and other members of his troublesome family be found? We can never expect to be quite free from doubters in the Church, since even in the Presence of the newly-risen Christ some doubted! Yet the Lord revealed Himself to the assembled company, although He knew that some among them would doubt that it was really their Lord who was risen from the dead.

18-20. *And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in 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 whatever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.* And we say, "Amen," too! May He be most manifestly with us here even now, for His sweet love's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—317, 301, 286.

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

WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?
NO. 2519

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 30, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."
Luke 18:1.

MY mind alights with great joy upon the simple Truth of God which gleams on the very surface of our text—then, *man may pray!* If men ought to pray, they *may* pray. Whatever a man ought to do, it is clear that he has the right and the privilege to do—and though this may seem a very common-place truth to those of us whose hearts are at ease through faith in Jesus and who enjoy daily communion with God in prayer—yet there is an exquisite sweetness about this fact to a man who fears that he may not pray. He has come into such a miserable state of heart that he feels as if he could not pray and he fears that he *may not pray*. Satan tells him that the door of mercy is shut against him, that his day of Grace is over and that the time of hope for him is now past and gone. But our text says, "Men ought always to pray." Then, men *may always pray*!

Your knees may be bent before the altar of God, though they are stained through many a fall into sin. Though it is many years since you ever thought of praying, yet you may pray! Though, perhaps, you have even denied that there is a God, still you may pray! Though you have ridiculed the very notion of prayer, you may pray—God does not refuse to you the permission to come to His Mercy Seat. Though you have committed every crime in the catalog of sin, you may pray. And though you have gone on in those crimes and involved yourself yet more and more deeply in iniquity, you may pray! Though you are within a few days of death and of damnation unless the Grace of God shall visit you, yet you may pray! It is clear that you may pray because men ought always to pray, and what they *ought* to do they *may* do! Grasp that Truth of God, O despairing one, and grip it fast, and say to your despair, "Get away from me! It is not possible that I am denied the right of praying unto the Lord while such a text as this still stands in Holy Writ, 'Men ought always to pray.'"

Now, look at the text again, and lay stress upon the first word of it—"*Men* ought always to pray." I feel so grateful to the Holy Spirit that this text does not say, "*Saints* ought always to pray," because then I might ask myself, "Am I a saint?" And, perhaps, I might have to answer, "No, I am far from it." But the text does not say, "saints," and it does not even say, "Tender-hearted, penitent persons who are in a very gracious state ought always to pray." No, there is no description of character given in the text—for which I am deeply grateful. Those exhortations that leave

the character as wide as possible are all the more full of Grace and condescending love!

Who ought always to pray, then? "Men." And the word, "men," is generic and includes the *race*. "Men." That is, men and women and children—old men and fathers, young men and maidens—all who belong to the race of mankind ought always to pray! Perhaps you say, "So-and-So is not a good man." No, but he *is* a man, and *men* ought always to pray! "He is a long way from being a commendable man, a man of mark, a man of note, a nobleman in the truest sense of that term." Ah, but he is a *man*, and men ought always to pray! Go down the back streets into the dark alleys where there are men who scarcely seem to be men, and women who are scarcely women, and tell even them that they are still included under this head, "Men ought always to pray." Go upstairs and stand by the bed where Death has his victim by the throat—the man yet living is still a *man*—that poor creature lying there is not yet a corpse, but still a man! Say to him, "Men ought always to pray." They who curse and swear ought always to pray. They who live without any regard for God, or even in disbelief of His existence, and detestation of His Gospel, yet they ought always to pray! And, as I said at the beginning, the "ought" implies a *permission,* for, what a man ought to do, he *may* do and, therefore, whoever you may be, if you are in the shape of a man, you ought to pray!

If you have a head on your shoulders and lungs that heave, and a heart that palpitates—if you are still in the land of the living and can be numbered among the sons of men—to you this text rings out a grand and glorious Gospel! Even though it seems to be put in the form of a Law of God by the use of that stern word, "ought," yet it really is in the form of the Gospel—you may pray if you are either man or woman, if you are of the race of mankind, for, "men ought always to pray."

Oh, that some poor heart might catch at this sweet Word of God! That woman talked of throwing herself over London Bridge—yet even *she* may pray! That man thought of crossing the Atlantic and hiding himself from his fellow men, leaving his kith and kin to get away from the place where he has dishonored his name. Do not think of such a thing, my dear Sir, but pray, for you may pray! There is not in Heaven or earth anything that forbids you to pray! There is an act of amnesty and oblivion passed in the court of God and you are not excepted from it. There is no Book Inspired of Him that denies you a place at the Mercy Seat! There is no messenger sent of God who will say to you, "Thus says the Lord, You shall not pray," but, on the contrary, bringing before you the living and Inspired Word of the living Christ of God, we say to you, "Men ought always to pray!" Therefore you ought to pray and, therefore, you *may* pray!

Now let us turn the text around a little and put the emphasis on another word. "Men ought *always* to pray." Therefore, men may pray *now.* If they ought *always* to pray, they ought to pray *now,* and if they ought to pray now, they may pray now! Is not that a precious, blessed Truth of God? Here you sit, poor Sinner, and I am talking to you. Never mind that very respectable person who is sitting next to you. I am not, just now, thinking of her, I am not speaking to him—I mean *you,* poor, sad, guilty one! Perhaps you say, "I do not feel in a state of mind in which I can

pray. I hardly know why I came in here. I am very sad, I am very troubled, I am very sinful, I am very hard-hearted." But, my dear Friend, *you may pray*! Let me stop a minute. In this solemn silence, you may breathe your first prayer to God. May God help you, my poor Brother, to say for the first time, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" May He help you, my dear Sister, who has lived so long without prayer, to say now, "Lord, receive me, and forgive me, and let me be Your daughter, Your child, henceforth and forever!"

Do you not see this? If men—and you are in that category—if *human beings ought always to pray*, then they *may* always pray! And, "always," must include this present moment! So you may pray *now!* You *ought* to pray now, for you are in the list of men! Therefore, pray now, for, "now," must be included in the word, "always." "Well," someone says, "I will hasten home and pray." Do not do that! Sit where you now are and let your soul breathe itself out to God. "But I would like to get down on my knees." Yes, I would like that you should if it were fit and proper, but there is no need of it. Get on the knees of your soul! Many a time, when the body is on its knees, the soul is not really praying—and there is a way in which the soul can be prostrate before God even though the body stands. Even now, into the very dust I throw my own spirit before the thrice-holy God and, prostrate before Him, I pray, "Lord, help some who are here to pray, *now,* to You! For the first time in their lives, even now, while these words are escaping from my lips, may their hearts confess their sin and cry unto You, great Father, for the exercise of Your infinite mercy!" Why should it not be so? I believe that the Spirit of God is at work here at this moment and is leading some of you into this blessed act of prayer. It so, let His name be praised for it!

There is one thing more to be noticed before I plunge into the text and that is, "Men ought always to pray, *and not to faint*." Then it is clear that prayer is always—if it is true prayer—an effectual and profitable exercise to any man who prays, for, if men ought to pray, it is plain that there is something in prayer that is helpful to the spirit, for men ought not to do that which is a mere vain and empty thing. God cannot require us to do that which will end in smoke, or which will be a mere nothing! God does not ask any of us to go and talk to the winds and whistle to the waves! There must be some *reality* in prayer—it must be His intention to hear and to answer prayer or else He would not put it thus—"Men ought always to pray."

Would He give us permission to do a thing that would have no value in it, whatever? No. Would He *exhort* us to do it, would He *command* us to do it when He knew that, if we did it, it would just be a mere form? Does God send us to act like the daughters of Danaus, to fill a bottomless vessel with leaking buckets? Does He tell us, like Sisyphus, to spend our lives rolling a huge stone up the hill which will only roll back, again, upon us? Does He make fools of us? Has He spoken in secret and said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek you My face in vain"? It cannot be! I hold that if God does not hear and answer prayer, it is a piece of foolery. And I cannot conceive that God would set any of us to do what would be an insane, or at least an idiotic thing. No, if men ought always to pray, there is

something real in prayer and, when the Lord says that we ought to pray, it is because He stands ready to grant the desire of our hearts and to send us away with a blessing.

I. With this preface, dear Friends, we come to our text, and I notice concerning it, first, here is A PERPETUAL DUTY, OR PRIVILEGE, OR BOTH. "Men ought always to pray."

It means, of course, first, that men *ought to pray habitually.* There should be—and where the Grace of God is there will be—the habit of prayer. There will be the prayer at set times. It is necessary to mark out the plots in the garden, to keep them from the path where you walk, so that growing plants may not be trod down by the busy feet of toil. We need some set times, some little enclosures, some hours and periods marked off for prayer. These should be regularly attended to. Our private prayers—it is a great loss to our souls if these are ever neglected. Our family prayers—I am sure it is a grievous injury to a Christian household if it is not gathered regularly for prayer. Our prayers in the House of God among our Brothers and Sisters, too, must not be forgotten. We love the assemblies for prayer—we have given heed to the Apostolic injunction, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." All these things ought you to do, yet there is a habit of *prayer* that is higher than all this! The Jews prayed three times a day. There have been some holy men who have prayed at least seven times a day, but I take it that the man who lives near to God could not tell how many times a day he prays, for, whether he has three or seven times of special and notable prayer in word, he will have 70 times seven times in a day in which his heart speaks with God about everything that occurs. I think that it is well before every action to breathe a prayer, and during every action to breathe a prayer, and after every action to breathe a prayer.

"Salt," says the Old Testament, "without prescribing how much." So is it to be with prayer—prayer, without prescribing how much. You can never overdo it. Possibly those matters which appear to require least prayer are the very things which require most prayer. "Men ought always to pray." You do not have to leave off your business to pray, or turn aside from domestic labor or public service—all of which must be attended to. You can do that and pray just the same—and this is the way in which Christians always should pray.

But I do not think that this text so much intends to teach the continuity of prayer as the pertinacity of prayer. I mean not so much the *always* praying as the *keeping on praying for any particular thing that you have asked for.* You are to continue to pray! Let me try and open this up a little. "Men ought always to pray," that is, to pray *under all circumstances.* Whatever the difficulty or the trouble is, pray about it. It is a domestic trouble—pray about it. It is a business trouble—pray about it. It is a Church difficulty—pray about it. I wish to bear my personal witness upon this matter. I have had and I still have, more burdens to bear, I think, than any other man who lives—heavy burdens, not my own, but for others and for God's Glory—that which daily comes upon me, the care not only of this huge Church, but of so many other Churches as well. And I

have found that I never have a burden of any sort but it is my wisdom at once to—

"Take it to the Lord in prayer."

I have had burdens that have so troubled me that I have been quite baffled. I have thought my best and I have done my best, but the trouble has remained and, at last, I have taken it bodily and put it up on the shelf. And I have said to the Lord, "I will never touch that trouble again, I will leave it in Your hands, my blessed Master." I believe that, generally, it has been the best mode of dealing with it, to put it entirely into His hands. There are certain things for which, after having done all else that can be done, the only remedy is prayer.

Let it be definitely accepted among us Christian people that whatever the difficulty is, whatever shape it takes, secular or sacred, "Men ought always to pray," that is, they ought to *pray about everything*. This is the remedy that will cure all diseases. This is the sword that shall cut the Gordian knot if it cannot be untied. This is the key that fits the wards of every lock in the prison house of our sorrow. We shall get clean out if we do but know how to use the key of prayer! "Men ought always to pray." There may be a Brother who is likely to make discord—shall I go and battle with him? No, I will tell the Lord about him—He will deal with him better than I can. Oh, but that man has begun to preach flat heresy! Shall I have a fight with him? Well, I may controvert with him if I am driven to it, but I will *first* tell the Lord about him. The Lord can settle him far better than I can. "Straight ahead makes the best runner." Instead of going round to the servant and trying to curry favor with him, go straight to the Master! Go at once to headquarters about everything. "Men ought always to pray." Oh, to learn this lesson well!

And, dear Friends, we ought to pray *under all oppositions to prayer*. Sometimes we say to ourselves, "Really, I could not pray about *that* matter." Well, then, if you cannot pray about it, do not have anything to do with it—it is a sure sign that there is a leprosy in it, so touch it not! The cankerworm of Hell is in it if you cannot pray about it. Flee from it as you would from Hell, itself. It must be a foul and filthy thing if you cannot pray about it. No, Beloved, there cannot be such a thing, but, whatever seems to be in the way of your praying, believe that whenever it is hardest to pray, it is most necessary to pray! Whenever it seems to you that you cannot pray, then you must say, "Now I have seven times more need to pray about this thing than I have about other matters in which prayer comes more easy to me." It is a danger signal when you cannot pray. It is the rattle of the rattlesnake when you cannot pray—there must be some deadly mischief near at hand. Whatever the difficulty in prayer, you must, by the help of the Divine Spirit, break through all barriers, for you must pray.

"Men ought always to pray." Then they ought to pray *even if there has been a long delay in answers to their prayers.* I object very greatly to the practice of some of whom I have read, who have given God a certain time limit during which they will pray. I have heard of a woman who said that she would pray for her husband for 20 years and, according to the story, at the end of 20 years he was converted, but if he had not been converted

just then, it would have been at her peril to leave off prayer, even at the end of the 20 years! Our dear Brother, Mr. George Muller, has on his "prayer book" the name of a Brother for whom he has prayed, I think I heard him say, some 36 years. That was some years ago, so it must be a longer time than that, now, unless, indeed, the prayer has been answered. But he has the inward persuasion that this person will yet be brought to the Savior's feet and, therefore, he daily mentions the case before God in prayer. By the way, he tells us of a very admirable plan of his for booking his requests in prayer and marking them off as they are answered—and those that are not answered he lets stand until, in process of time, he finds that some of them were not proper requests and he puts that against them. But he finds that God does hear prayer and he likes to keep a record of it. If we did the same, we would have much more holy commonsense confidence in God, and our praying would be a more business-like matter as, indeed, it ought to be. But do not say to yourself, "I shall pray just so long for this thing." If what you are asking for touches the Kingdom and the Glory of Christ, persevere in the prayer with this text to encourage you, "Men ought always to pray."

If it is something which concerns only *your own personal comfort,* then God's Spirit may teach you to limit your prayers. "Concerning this thing," said Paul, "I besought the Lord thrice." Yes, and then he had not the answer that he desired, but he had one with which he was perfectly satisfied! The Lord did not take away the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, but He said, "My Grace is sufficient for you." Paul still had to bear the trial, but he received from the Lord the Grace to enable him to bear it! Ask with bated breath when you are asking something temporal for yourself, for you are but as a silly child in that which relates to yourself. A boy might fall in love with his father's razors or wish to eat some delicacy that would be most dangerous to his health—and you would not have your child persisting in asking for that which would injure him! You are not angry with him for asking, for he knows no better, so you say, "My child, that would not be good for you!" If your son is a good child, he will not ask again, or, asking, he will not be angry if he is refused.

And, often, you know not what is good for you. If God had really put it within our reach to have whatever we chose to ask for, it would be a very dangerous power, indeed! If the Lord should say to me, "You may have whatever you wish for," I would straightway get to my chamber and say, "O my Father, divest me of this dangerous privilege! I ask You, of Your tender mercy, never to give me anything which Your great wisdom does not see to be good for me. Do not trust me with so dangerous a power as this! You are Omniscient and I am foolish. You are altogether good and Your will for me is better than my will for myself can ever be! Not, then, as I will, but as You will, let it be done to me." But if it is anything concerning the Kingdom of Christ, anything for the Glory of God, continue in prayer, even though it is for 50 years—and let this little sentence cheer you—"Men ought always to pray."

Pray on, also, dear Friends, *despite all temptations and all personal difficulties.* When you feel, "My prayer is dull and feeble," still pray. When

Satan says, "There is no use in praying about *that* matter," still pray. When others round about you say, "It is not a fit subject for prayer," still pray. When at last it seems to be despairing work and you have to cry, "Has God forgotten to be gracious.? Has He in anger shut up the heart of His compassion?" still pray, for, "Men ought always to pray."

II. Now I must say just a few words upon THE GROUND OF THIS OBLIGATION "Men ought always to pray."

Well, we ought always to pray because *we have always some sin to confess,* we have always *some good thing for which to bless God* and we have always *some need that needs to be supplied.* I must admit that I have never yet been in a condition in which I did not need to pray. He who is down in the valley needs prayer that he may be able to climb the hill. He who is up the hill needs to pray twice as much that his head may not grow dizzy—and that he may not fall from his high position. He who has not should pray till he has and he who has should pray that he may be blessed in the having. If your cup is empty, pray the Lord to fill it. If your cup is full, pray God to make your hand steady that you spill not its contents. If you cannot see your way, pray God to guide you. If you can see your way, pray God to help you to follow it. Are you young? Pray God to help you against the sins of youth. Are you in the middle of life? Pray God to help you in the middle passage, where trials are so numerous. Are you almost into Heaven with age? Pray that you may enter Heaven with prayer.

"Men ought always to pray." It is always an incumbent duty for one or other of these reasons. Men ought always to pray *because God commands them to pray.* "Pray without ceasing" is a clear, clean-cut command. There is no getting over that passage, "Pray without ceasing." It lies wrapped up within the heart of the First Commandment of the Law of God –"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your soul, and with all your strength."

"Men ought always to pray." *It is always the wisest thing they can do.* "Men ought always to pray." It is sometimes the *only thing* that they can do. "Men ought always to pray," or else they take the matter out of God's hands. "Men ought always to pray," for they always need God's help, whether they think they do or not.

III. I will not go into further reasons, though there are very many for this obligation, but I shall close by noticing THE ALTERNATIVE—"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." If you do not pray, you will faint.

There are some who faint fatally. They set out upon the Christian profession. Perhaps there are some here who once did that. Years ago you were a member of a church—where are you now? Years ago you used to speak, sometimes, on the village green in the name of Christ—you do not do that now. How have you come to be where you are—either not even making a profession of religion, or certainly doing nothing in Christ's service? I shall not make a guess, but I shall pronounce a certainty—you went wrong and you began to faint in your spiritual course because you restrained prayer. You fainted because you did not pray! Ah, a religion that does not begin with secret prayer is not worth the label you put on it! A religion that is not sustained by *secret* prayer is a lie! A religion that

does not grow through secret prayer may be puffed up, but it is not truly *built up* by the hand of God. No, no, young man, if you seek to join a Church, to be baptized, to come to the Communion Table and, all the while, you do not pray, your religion is but the baseless fabric of a vision and will disappear! We have had a great many men whom I have seen and known at different times who could speak very fluently and did labor in the service of God for a while, but the great mischief with them was that they did not live to God in private! If it is so with any of you, your religion may be built up very loftily, like some high tower, but it will come down very speedily because the foundations have been badly laid. You must either pray or you will faint!

If you are a child of God, the same alternative lies before you. You will either pray or faint—that is to say, sometimes *you will get bewildered.* I do. I wish to do the right thing, but scarcely know which is right out of 20 things. I would deal with this Brother kindly, but with that other Brother firmly. How shall I mix firmness and kindness? If you are pastor of a Church—and you may be, my dear Friend—you know how many puzzles we have before us in dealing not only with our own poor human nature, but with the human nature of God's people, for there is a lot of human nature even where there is spiritual nature—and there are very odd ways even in good men! What are you to do in such cases? Well, if you cannot go back within the veil, and speak with the Holy Oracle, you will faint.

I have told you before that when I was coming to London, there was a strange old man in the Prayer Meeting who, when the people were praying that I might have a blessing in going, asked the Lord that I might be helped to "swallow bundles of brush crossways." That I have done many a time. Another prayed that I might be "delivered from the bleating of the sheep" and, for the life of me, I could not make out what he meant. I am not sure that he understood it himself, but I quite understand it now. There is no leader of the flock who will not occasionally wish to be delivered from the bleating of the sheep, for they bleat such different tunes sometimes. You may listen to the bleating of one sheep and another—some, perhaps, that are not bleating in the right style, but it is a great thing to feel, "Now, I am not going to be guided by the way these sheep bleat. I am set to guide them, rather than to let them guide me, but I am going to be guided by a higher voice than the bleating of the sheep, namely, the voice of the Great Shepherd." I believe that every man who seeks to win souls—and I am addressing many who are in charge of Bible classes, or at the head of Missions, or in some way serving the Lord—will faint, I am sure he will—in the management of his work unless he gets right out of it sometimes into prayer and lays it all before the Lord and waits upon Him. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" in their ministry for God, in their service on behalf of the souls of their brethren. They will faint from very bewilderment if they do not pray.

And you will be sure to faint, at times, *through weariness and depression of spirit, through a sense of your own powerlessness.* "Oh," you say, "would God I could give it all up! Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest!" It is a great mercy that the wings do not

grow when we ask for them, for they would be of no use to us—what should we do, flying away like doves? If God had a message for us to carry like a pigeon, He would give us the wings and then it would be right for us to fly. But what we generally mean is that we want to get away from hard work, we are looking for Saturday night. How do you like the workman who says, on Tuesday morning, "O Sir, I wish it were Saturday night!" And when it gets on towards Thursday, he meets you and says, "Good morning, Sir, I wish it was Saturday night"? "Oh!" I think you would say, "next Saturday night will be the last I shall want to see you." You need a better workman than that—and if we get to fainting in that style, we should say to ourselves, "Come, this will not do! I must go and tell the Lord all about my difficulty and my trouble." Wait upon Him for fresh strength and then you will come out as though you had bathed your face in the dew of Heaven, the Light of God had entered your eyes and you had come fresh from a vision of angels to talk with men with new tongues as the Spirit gave you utterance! "Wait, I say, on the Lord," for this it is that will keep you from fainting and make you to renew your strength like the eagle's!

I have come to deal with God's people in the close of my subject, but I almost wish I had not—that I could have kept on in the first strain and talked with those who are beginning to pray. Dear Friends, do begin tonight, I pray you, with your eye on my Lord on yonder Cross, all stained with the streaks of crimson blood flowing down His precious body. Look at Him! There is life in a look at Him. Look at Him as He dies for you and you shall live! God help you to do so, for Christ's sake! And when you have believed in Him, come and be baptized in His name, as these dear friends are about to be. God bless you all! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" —145 (PART 1), 978, 977.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 145.

I am going to preach about prayer, [the exposition was always at the beginning of the service] so we will read "David's Psalm of Praise." Thus we shall have two parts of true worship.

Verses 1, 2. *I will extol You, my God, O king; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless You; and I will praise Your name forever and ever.* Notice how long David expected to praise God. He was going to praise God forever—and then after that, "forever and ever." "'Every day will I bless You'—that is, when I do not seem to be partaking of any choice temporal blessing, I will still bless You. When I sit like Job on the dunghill, 'every day will I bless You; and I will praise Your name'—Your Character, all that has to do with You, 'forever and ever.'" The first two verses are the preface of the Psalm. Now the Psalmist begins his music.

3. *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised.* He is great without bounds. Let Him be praised without end. There is no end to His greatness; let there be no end to our adoration.

3, 4. *And His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts.* The fathers shall be the preachers to their sons and the sons shall be the preachers to their sons. The flaming torch of Jehovah's praise shall be passed from hand to hand all down the centuries. As long as men shall live, God shall have the praise of the godly. "One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts."

5. *I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty.* This is a beautiful expression—"I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty." It is a heaped-up expression. David was in an ecstasy of delight when he wrote it. He did not know how sufficiently to express his adoration of God. Other men might praise God for themselves, but that was not enough for David—he must take his own turn at the blessed business! "I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty."

5, 6. *And of Your wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts: and I will declare Your greatness.* "And I will declare." Yes, in comes David's personal note again! He cannot leave the praises of God alone, He must take his full share in this heavenly task. I wish that whenever there was work to do for God, or prayer to be offered or praise to be given to the Lord, you and I would always interject this personal pronoun, "and I." You know, perhaps, dear Friends, that you never find Bartholomew's name by itself in any of the Gospels—it is always somebody else "and *Bartholomew."* It is well to be a good helper of other people. And when others are praising the Lord, it is good to come in as David did with the personal resolve and confession, "and I will declare Your greatness."

7. *They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness.* Mark every word in this choice expression—"They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness." They shall see this goodness and they shall appreciate it as *great* goodness! They shall remember it and so have the memory of God's great goodness and then they shall speak of it. "They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness" and when they have done so, they shall do it again and again! "They shall *abundantly* utter the memory of Your great goodness."

7, 8. *And shall sing of Your righteousness. The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion.* He has no passion, but He is full of compassion! What a mercy that is for us! Sometimes we hear persons say that God cannot do this or that—that He cannot feel and cannot suffer. That is not true, for He can do anything that He likes. A god who has no feeling is a poor god—of no service whatever to us—but *"the Lord* is gracious and full of compassion."

8. *Slow to anger, and of great mercy.* Oh, what a blessing it is for you and for me that He is slow to anger!

9. *The LORD is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works.* Whether you search for the far-distant with a telescope, or peer into the minute with the microscope, the Lord's tender mercies are found everywhere! Like the light, without which you see nothing, so is the mercy of God—it enlightens everything! "His tender mercies are over all His works."

10. *All Your works shall praise You, O Lord; and Your saints shall bless You.* "Standing in the inner circle, 'Your saints' shall mingle their love with their praise and so 'shall bless You.' Theirs shall be a choicer, more tender worship than that of all 'Your works' besides." The works of God are like a great organ, but it is man who puts his fingers upon the keys and brings forth all the music. Man is the interpreter of the universe—he praises God as the inanimate creation can never do.

11. *They shall speak of the glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power.* I wish we did speak more of such subjects and talk more upon these sacred themes. I do not think there is ever any deficiency of talk, but I am afraid there is a very great lack of such talk as this—"They shall speak of the glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power."

12. *To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His Kingdom.* See how David keeps to the subject with which he began the Psalm—"I will extol You, my God, my king." Yes, and he sings about the King all through this Psalm. His great objective is to make us see that there never was such a King as the infinitely-glorious Jehovah, who surpasses all the kings of the earth!

13. *Your Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom.* Other kingdoms come and go. They last during their little day and then they vanish away. Look, for instance, at the kingdom of Alexander the Great, who only reigned for about 12 years and when he died left no successor. We talk of great earthly monarchs—they are but monarchs of an hour compared with the Kingdom of Jehovah. Well might David say to Him, "Your Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom."

13. *And Your dominion endures throughout all generations.* What kind of a King is this whose Kingdom is everlasting and what are the acts that make Him famous? Notice the first thing He is said to do.

14. *The LORD upholds all that fall, and raises up all those that are bowed down.* This is His glory! This is the majesty of the King of kings, that He takes notice of the poor and weak! The compassion of God is, to a great extent, the glory of God. That He has such tender mercies toward the unworthy is the subject of the loudest of our songs! "Jehovah upholds all that fall," that is, such as *would* fall were it not for His upholding! Jehovah lifts up all those who have fallen and raises up those who are bowed down. Blessed be His holy name!

15. *The eyes of all wait upon You.* What a King is this who must feed all His subjects and who must have all His subjects depend upon Him alone! "The eyes of all wait upon You."

15. *And You give them their meat in due season.* It is an act of Grace, not of debt—"You *give* them their meat." Did you ever think of the vast variety of the separate sorts of food that the Lord provides for each of His creatures He has formed? The meat that feeds an elephant would not feed a lion. That which feeds a lion would not feed a sparrow. That which feeds a sparrow would not satisfy the fish of the sea. To every creature God gives its own food. "You give them their meat in due season." The fruits of the earth do not ripen all at once, but the various harvests succeed each other. Notice how each of the many flowers is full of honey just at the time when the particular insect which is to come down into the

flower-bell is needing that nectar to feed upon. It is marvelous to see how God has timed creation to the ticking of a watch—and when the flower is ready, then comes the fly, the bee, the butterfly, or the moth that shall be fed thereby. "You give them their meat in due season."

16. *You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.* As men feed doves in their courtyard, carrying down to them their little handful of food and opening the hand to pour it out, so does God feed all living creatures readily and easily enough by the simple opening of His hand. But He does it. He satisfies the desire of every living thing and He will satisfy your desire, dear Soul, if you take it to Him. You say, perhaps, that you are very poor. Well, then, cry to Him! He has never failed His creatures, yet, and He will not fail you! He hears the young ravens when they cry and He will hear you, a man created in the image of God, when you cry to Him.

17, 18. *The LORD is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His work. The LORD is near unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth.* As the Omnipresent Deity, the Lord is not far from any of us, but there is a peculiar nearness of God to His people—a nearness of knowledge, a nearness of affection, a nearness of heart by which He looks upon them as His own special portion, His own peculiar heritage. "Jehovah is near unto all them that call upon Him." That is the name of His people—they are a *calling people*, they are a *praying people*—and they pray to Him "in truth." There are some who offer the mockery of pretended prayer, but God is not near to them in the special sense in which He "is near unto all them that call upon Him in truth."

19. *He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him.* "He will fulfill"—He will *fill full*—"the desire of them that fear Him." If You fear Him, you need not fear any need! You have nothing at all that you need to fear.

19, 20. *He also will hear their cry, and will save them. The LORD preserves all them that love Him: but all the wicked will He destroy.* These two things always go together—as surely as the Lord does the one, He will do the other. While He preserves His saints, He will certainly destroy the wicked.

21. *My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord.* God move us, each one, to do this! Then with the Psalmist we may fitly say—

21. *And let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever.*

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A PROGRAM NEVER CARRIED OUT
NO. 2520

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY JUNE 6, 1897.
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTTOBER. 25, 1885.

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son." Luke 15:20, 21.

I THOUGHT I would hardly preach a set discourse from this familiar text, but just give you some odds and ends of thought upon these words. You know that there are many people who are in such a low state of mind—and who have such a humble opinion of themselves that if I bring them a loaf of bread, they will be afraid to eat it—so I have only brought a few crumbs, this time, and my hope is that they will say with the Syrophenician woman, "Truth, Lord: yet the little dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." May any such persons who are here feel able to pick up a stray thought which shall be spiritual food to them, even manna sent from Heaven and, perhaps, when they have eaten one morsel of it, they may then dare to eat more, and yet more, until their souls are satisfied and they learn to rejoice in the God of their salvation! I am going to take a roving commission and ramble about somewhat more than usual—and I shall do so because I know there are many here who are, themselves, rambling. Perhaps if I ramble, I may come across them. If I keep along the city road, some of the hedge birds that are out of the way may get missed, but if I go over hedge and ditch and say something unusual here and something startling there—it may be that they will wonder how I went just where they happened to be as much as I marvel how they have managed to go where they are!

My one thought at this time is not concerning my subject, but my objective. I have not any particular subject, but my objective is that some poor prodigal may return to God, that some lost child may come back to the Father's heart, that, in fact, some sinner may repent of sin and believe in Jesus and so enter into rest this very hour! I would rather be the means of saving a soul from death than be the greatest orator on earth! I would rather bring the poorest woman in the world to the feet of Jesus than I would be made Archbishop of Canterbury! There is no honor and no dignity under Heaven that can content us unless souls are won for Christ! And if souls are won, we shall care little how the great work was done instrumentally, for God will have the whole of the glory of it.

I. From my text I am going, first, to make this observation, that THE COMING SINNER'S FORECASTS DIFFER VERY MUCH FROM THE FACTS.

When a sinner comes back to God, he generally has a notion of how he is coming back and what he is going to feel—and what he is going to say, and what he is going to receive. He fashions in his mind a kind of program of what he fancies is about to happen. But, so far as my observation has gone, his programs are generally good for nothing and his forecasts of what will happen are usually quite mistaken! This forlorn son said, "I will arise and go to my father, and I will ask him to make me as one of his hired servants."

Notice, dear Friends, first, that the prodigal's program was not carried out *with regard to his own prayers.* He did not say *in prayer* what he had determined that he would say. He did begin to repeat it, but he never finished it. You remember that he resolved to say, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants." That was his intention, but the prayer he actually uttered did not contain that last sentence, he did not cry, "Make me as one of your hired servants!" I suppose that he was going to say it, but his father kissed him and so stopped it. "No, my boy," the father seemed to say, "you shall not even *ask* to be made a hired servant. I know that humble petition is simmering in your heart, but it shall never come out of your lips, I will not permit you to say that."

Perhaps someone here is saying, "I know what I will say tonight when I pray, I know how I will confess my sin, I know what I will ask of God." No, dear Friend, you do not! When you come to the real praying, you will find that something very different will occur to your mind. Much of what now suggests itself to you will fly away and fresh thoughts will come in. Therefore, do not be particular about making up a program at all. If this son had gone back to his father without having a preconceived prayer, it would have been just as well. And so, if you do but go back, with a strong desire, to the great Father from whom you have wandered—even though you cannot compose a prayer in words, never mind about that! The composition would have been of little value to you if you had been able to make it. Go with your broken heart and pour out sighs and cries and tears before the Lord. Wordless though the prayers may be, they shall not lack for force and energy to prevail with God.

But the prodigal's program also broke down, very sweetly and blessedly, *with regard to his father's action.* He had, in his mind's eye, a vision of what his father would do. Possibly he feared that his father would spurn him altogether but, dismissing that fear, he may have thought, "If my father is very kind, indeed, to me, he will at least severely chide me and then put me into some low position in the household and bid me seek to retrieve my lost character and work my way up till, at last, I may be permitted to sit somewhere at the bottom of the table." He had some such notion as that, but his program went all to pieces because his father suddenly manifested his intense love to him. He was a great way off, his tears were flowing and his heart was trembling, yet, in a moment, be-

fore he knew where he was, his father's arms were around his neck and the kiss of love was on his cheek!

So, when a sinner is coming to Christ, he tries to fancy what will happen. He says, "I must be in distress of mind, I must be in deep anguish, I must be pleading and crying to God for forgiveness and so, perhaps, the Light of God will gradually come to me." Then it often happens that, in a single moment, the soul finds perfect peace with God. I should not wonder if, while I am speaking, the Spirit of God should come rushing into some dry and thirsty soul and fill it up to the brim with heavenly delight! Multitudes of persons find peace with God all of a sudden. It is not so with all, for God has many ways of working. "The wind blows where it will," but have you not sometimes noticed that when everything has been very quiet and still, suddenly you have heard the moaning of the wind and then, almost before you were aware of it, the clouds were flying before the breeze, like winged chariots? Have you never been on the Thames, in a yacht, when there has come a sudden squall that seemed as if it would upset everything? Well the Spirit of God can come upon a man just as swiftly as that! The poor soul is dreaming of the way in which he thinks the blessing may come to him, but when it is bestowed by God, it surprises, astonishes, astounds him! Before he expects such gifts, sin is forgiven, Divine Grace is received, joy fills the heart and the man is glad with exceedingly great joy. May it be so with some of you who are now here! May your program be broken in that respect by the sudden incoming of unexpected Grace!

There is no doubt whatever that this prodigal son expected that he would have to undergo a probation—that his father would put him in quarantine for a time. He felt that he was not fit to be received back just as he was, that his father could not let him sit at the table the first day he came home, but that he would say to him, "Remember how badly you have behaved, young man—you have acted so wildly that it will be long before I can think of trusting you again." Instead of speaking thus, the father said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring here the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry." This was done at once, the very first day the prodigal returned! "What?" asks someone, "can I be introduced to the highest privileges of Christian communion as soon as I come to Christ?" Yes, that is God's way of welcoming sinners! Look at the dying thief. The very day he repented, he went to Paradise! Though he had been a great sinner until then, Jesus said to him, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Only think of a child of the devil in the morning being changed to a child of God at night—and made to rejoice in Christ Jesus with the happiest of the saints in Glory!

It was after a similar fashion in the case of this younger son. He was to be in no inferior position, he was to be in all ways equal to his elder brother and, in some respects, there was even a higher joy concerning him. I wish it might happen to some of you as it happened to me one Sunday morning, long ago. I went into the little House of Prayer as burdened as ever this forlorn young man could be, but I came out as full of joy as ever that household was when "they began to be merry." Why

should it not be so with you, also? I have seen my Master give His most charming feasts to newcomers and make a festival for raw recruits—yes, and set upon the tables all the delights of His dearest love to be food for sinners who, but a day or two before, were feeding the swine of their lusts and indulging in every kind of sin! Oh, the splendor of Almighty Love, the Infinite Majesty of the Grace of God to deal thus with the guilty! Your poor program is no guide at all! You think that God will treat you as men deal with men, but, lo, He deals with you after the manner of God! "Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy."

So, you see, this prodigal's program was erroneous, both as to his own prayers and as to his father's action. In like manner God deals with His returning prodigals exceeding abundantly above all they ask or even think. This fact ought to induce many to come to Christ who are, at present, afraid to come. You do not know, dear Friends, how gracious my Lord is! You would never stand outside His door if you knew what accommodation He has for the poorest beggar who does but knock. Did you but know the readiness of Christ's heart to move towards the chief of sinners, you would not linger away from Him. If you could only imagine how near you are to a heavenly bliss, the likes of which you have never tasted, you would cross the borderline at once! If other prodigals could only know what music and what dancing of a celestial kind might soon be all around them, they would not stay with the citizens of this barren country feeding the swine of this world—they would hasten home to the Father's house and the Father's love! Do not stay away, Brothers and Sisters, because of that foolish program of yours which makes you fancy that you must feel this and must feel that! God does not save us according to our programs—He has a far better way of His own! He does not act according to our prejudices or suppositions, but according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus!

So much for the first observation, that the coming sinner's forecasts differ very much from the facts.

II. My second remark is that THAT WHICH PREVAILS WITH GOD IS NOT THE COMING SINNER'S PRAYER TO GOD, BUT GOD'S SIGHT OF HIM.

Notice, when the prodigal resolved to return, he promised to himself what he would say to his father. But his father fell on his neck and kissed him before he could utter his petition—"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned." The utterance of the prayer of the son *followed* the display of love on the part of the father! The reason why the father acted with such wondrous favor to his son was not because the prodigal had prayed, for he had not done so. He had *resolved* to pray, but he had not actually prayed. His prayer followed the deed of mercy done by his father—and the cause of that mercy was that his father saw him! Do notice that his father saw him and, therefore, had compassion on him. His father saw

him and, therefore, ran to him. His father saw him and, therefore, fell on his neck. His father saw him and, therefore, kissed him!

What did the father see? Long before the prodigal saw his father, his father saw him and, first, *he saw his misery*. Suppose that it were your boy, you who have children. Suppose that somewhere in this crowd, perhaps near the door, you should see that son of yours who long ago ran away from you? Possibly he has been far away at sea—that might not be to his discredit, but, alas, he has also been living a very loose and sinful life. You have enquired for him. You have advertised for him, but you have not been able to find him. Suppose that you should, tonight, stumble on him all in rags, lean, cadaverous, consumptive, ready to die? I am sure that you would not begin enquiring what he had done, or where he had been, or anything of the sort! It would be the very sight of his awful misery, the lines of his sorrow and sickness that would at once touch your heart! As you would look at him, you would see his misery and you would also see *his relationship to you*. You would ask, "Is that really my boy? Is that my son?" When you had reckoned him up and, perhaps, his mother at your side had said, "Yes, that is our John, I am sure it is," there would be no further delay—your heart would have compassion and you would be ready to fall upon his neck and kiss him in the Tabernacle just as he is!

I knew a good minister whose name happened to be a Jewish one. We will say, "Benjamin." However, he was not a Jew, but one day there called upon him a venerable Israelite who fell at once upon the minister's neck and said, "O my son, my dear lost son!" The good man looked at him and said, "I do not understand what you mean, Sir." The Jew replied, "Years ago, I had a son who became a Christian and I disowned him. And I have always lamented for him ever since. I have hunted the world for him. I have advertised for him and now, at last, I thank the God of Abraham that I have found him." The good minister had to say, "My dear Sir, I am very sorry for you, but I am obliged to rob you of your comfort. I am not a Jew, I am a Gentile. My father long since went to be with God. You have made a mistake." So the poor old Jew went down the stairs broken-hearted because he had not found his son. It does not matter whether a man is a Jew or a Gentile—he loves his boy, does he not? Why, because we are men, we cannot bear to see our offspring in sickness and sorrow and poverty! And though they may have broken our hearts by their sin, yet they have not broken our hearts off from love to them.

It is just thus that God looks towards you, O penitent Sinner! It is not because you pray. It is not because of anything in you, but it is because He sees your sin and your misery—and sees in you, as a returning penitent, a child of His heart, one whom He has loved with an everlasting love, one for whom He gave His Son to die! And because He sees this in you, therefore He falls upon your neck and manifests Himself in Infinite Love to you. I have put this Truth of God, I hope, very plainly. But to any poor soul who says, "I cannot pray," I would answer, "Suppose you cannot? That is no reason why the Father should not run and fall upon your neck and kiss you." "But, oh, I cannot put words together! I have tried,

but failed to do so." Do you not see that this father kissed his son *before the prodigal had said a word*? Do you not perceive that very clearly in the narrative? The prayer, truly, had been concocted in his own heart, but he had not uttered it! He *never* uttered all of it, but his father had kissed him and blessed him before he had spoken a single word! So, it is not your *prayers*, it is not your *feelings*, it is not *anything in you* that will save you—it is the great heart of God who loves you that is your highest hope and the real grounds why you should be saved! Would to God you could believe this and find peace with Him through Jesus Christ His Son even now!

III. Now I want to make a third observation, which is that THE FASHION OF PRAYER MATTERS LITTLE, AS LONG AS IT IS TRUE PRAYER.

This young man had intended to pray *a contradictory prayer.* Notice what his prayer was. It makes me smile as I read it. Listen—"I will arise and go to my father and will say unto him, Father," and so on, "I am not worthy to be called your son." Why, then, did he call him, "Father"? So there is often a beautiful inconsistency about a true penitent's prayer—he puts God in His right place by calling Him, "Father," yet he does not dare, himself, to get into his right place to be called a son. But, surely, if I may call God, *"Father,"* I may call myself, "son," for the relationship necessarily exists on both sides if it exists at all! Ah, poor Sinner, I daresay your first prayer is full of blunders, but that does not matter as long as your heart is in it! The Lord knows how to put our prayers together and take all the contradictions out of them—He understands the meaning of our sighs and our groans!—

"To Him there's music in a groan
And beauty in a tear."

Notice, too, that the prodigal's prayer was *a confession rather than a prayer.* "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son." You see, he does not *ask* for anything—he just acknowledges his guiltiness and his unworthiness. It is only *part* of a prayer—a one-legged prayer, as it were—but, blessed be God, He accepts limping prayers! The oddest, strangest, most singular prayers that ever were prayed, so long as the heart of the man is in them going towards the Father, shall not be refused!

I am going to read you some Scriptures to comfort those of you who are afraid you cannot be saved because you cannot pray. Have you ever noticed what is regarded as prayer according to the Word of God? David says, in the 22nd Psalm, "Why are You so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" So that *roaring* is prayer when the heart is so sad that it cannot use words—when it *roars* like a wild beast rather than speaks like a human being! Some of you know what it means to get into such a state of misery that you dare not speak and yet cannot be silent—to be so distracted that you cannot think consecutively, you cannot read your own thoughts and do not know how to shape them before God—so that your utterance is more that of the roaring of a wounded and dying animal than the praying of a sensible, intelligent man. Yet even *that* is prayer and God accepts it as prayer!

Cries also are prayers. In the same 22nd Psalm, at the second verse, we read, "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent." This is the cry of pain that comes from a child, rather than the intelligent expression of the thoughts within the soul. But have you never known, dear Friend, what it is to be in such distress, even as a man, that you wish you could get alone and weep? The tears, perhaps, have refused to come, and you have sat down and said, "I am lost! I am lost. Ah, me! What will become of me, O my God?" Such crying as that, when you can hardly get the words out, is the best praying in the world. It is only, "Oh!" and, "Ah!" and, "Would that!" and all manner of broken and strange expressions. Yet those are prayers such as God hears and answers!

I will give you another text to show that prayer may sometimes take the shape of a cry. In Psalm 69:3, we read, "I am weary of my crying: my throat is dry." So crying *is* prayer, even hoarse crying, when, at last, the throat becomes so dry that not a word can be uttered. But that is not all, for *breathing* may also be praying. In the Book of Lamentations, in the third Chapter, at the 56th verse, we find this amazing petition, "Hide not Your ears from my breathing." The man cannot speak, his soul is too full. If he looks through Heaven and earth, he cannot find a word that he can utter! But quick and hot are the breathings of his life which seems as if it would ebb away. Yet that is true prayer. Some of the best prayer that ever reaches the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth is just like that—the breathing of agony when the very life seems to be expiring. As everything that has breath is to praise Jehovah, so let everyone who has breath feel that he can pray, for even breathing may be prayer!

Yes, and when you cannot breathe, what do you do, then? Why, when a man grows short of breath, then he *pants*. That again is prayer. Hear how David puts it in Psalm 42:1—"As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God!" You know how the stag that has been hunted, longs to have its smoking flanks in the water brooks, and to take a deep draught from the cooling stream, for it seems to be burning within like an oven. There it stands and pants to find the water—its whole soul seems to go up and down as it pants. Well, when you cannot breathe, when you feel as if that strong breath that I mentioned just now cannot be reached by you, you can pant! "I opened my mouth and panted," said David. Well, that again is some of the best prayer that God ever hears. Do not be afraid, therefore, that you cannot pray if even *panting is prayer*!

Yet further, in the 69th Psalm, at the third verse, David says, "My eyes fail while I wait for my God." And in the fifth Psalm, third verse, "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You, and will look up." So, you see, prayer may take another shape—*looking up may be a prayer*. I have read of an old saint who usually spent a whole hour in the day alone. And being watched and noticed, it was seen that he never said anything, but he stood quite still for an hour. So he was asked, "What, then, is your devotion?" He answered, "I look at God, and God looks at me." And I must confess that I sometimes find it a very high form of devotion to sit quite

still and look up. There is a reverent silence of worship that will sometimes disable the spirit from any other kind of communion. Prayer is—

"The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near."

Oh, you who cannot speak, but yet have your eyes—you can look up—and even in the look there shall be a prayer that God will regard, for He observes which way men's eyes go and, if their eyes are towards the hills, from where comes their help, He will bless them!

Next, a *moan may be a prayer*. Notice this text, Jeremiah 31:18—"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus." Moaning is rather the language of a cow than of a man, but, oh, that is a prayer that touches God's heart! We cannot bear to hear a child moan. You mothers who have nursed a sick child at night, I know that it has gone to your heart when you have heard that which you cannot describe otherwise than as moaning. And oh, poor troubled Sinner, if you cannot pray, but can only get alone and moan, that is good praying! See how Hezekiah prayed when he was sick—his praying was of this kind, according to Isaiah 38:14—"Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn like a dove." You know how a dove coos and how pathetic is the mourning of a dove bereaved of its mate. That is good praying and though to you it seems like chattering and only making a poor, silly, bird-like noise, it is true prayer when the heart is in it!

I am laboring with all my might to bring these things before you that you may see how simple a matter prayer is, so long as the heart is right with God. So notice, next, that *prayer is a sigh*. Psalm 80:11—"Let the sighing of the prisoner come before you." Further, it is a *groan*. Psalm 102:19, 20—"From Heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner." The very best prayer out of Heaven is a groan! Remember Romans 8:26? "The Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered"—groans with such unutterable pain about them that they are not to be fully expressed in words! These are the very intercessions of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, our groans are among the very best of prayers!

There is another form of prayer that David was accustomed to use and that was *spreading out his hands*. Psalm 88:9—"I have stretched out my hands unto You." And, in another place, Psalm 143:6—"I stretch forth my hands unto You." Sometimes he stood in prayer in this way, as if his heart was saying, "I need to get the blessing. I long to receive it. I am reaching out to You, my God, for it." How often have I seen a sick man pray like this when he could not do anything else, for words had gone and the mouth was stopped and choked, and the brow was covered with a clammy sweat! That is the sort of prayer that God will hear. O Sirs, you may go through your liturgies as many times as you please and, perhaps, there may not be any prayer in them, after all! You may intone them and accompany them with all the music of your choirs and your organs—and they may fall flat as death before the Throne of God! But a true penitent who gets alone in his agony and does but groan, or stretch out his hands, or glance his eyes to Heaven, shall never be refused by the great Father above!

There is one other kind of prayer—there may be a great many more—but this must suffice for the present. David says, in Psalm 6:8, "The Lord has heard the voice of my *weeping*." There, again, is wondrous power, as if the tears that fell from penitent and earnest eyes were treasured up in the tear bottle of God. Every tear from His children's hearts will go to the heart of the great Father and He will answer the requests of our tears. There is a salt about the tear of a seeking soul that is pleasant to God. If your tears burn their way down your cheeks, they will burn their way into the heart of God—and you shall get the blessing that you desire.

Now, after all this, I think that I may add that there is nobody here who dares to say that if he wills to pray, he cannot pray. If there is true prayer in his heart, the expression of it is so simple, so varied, so easy, that everyone must be capable of it! And I do pray that many here may feel that it is not so much *how* they come, or with *what* they come, as that if they do but come with the *heart*, God will receive them! Dear Hearts, will you not come? I wonder whether I am right in the reflection I sometimes make after I have been preaching? I sometimes say to myself, "I think that if I had heard that sermon when I was seeking the Savior, I would have found Him." I do not know how to put Christ's love more plainly, or give the invitation more simply. I wonder that souls do not come and yet I know that you will not come unless my Master draws you! But, surely, He will draw you! He *is* drawing you! Breathe a prayer to Him. He who refuses to pray deserves to be lost. He who knows that God will hear a cry, a breath, a groan, a moan, a panting and will not put up any of these—ah, well, what shall I say of him? Are you choosing your own damnation? Do you really mean to be ruined forever? Do not so, I pray you! God help you to come, now, to the great Father and to find joy and peace in Him! "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." "Turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

May He turn you, and bless you, and save you, for His great mercy's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY CHARLES H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 15.

Verse 1. *Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him.* It was a motley group—"all the publicans and sinners"—the riff-raff, the scum, as people sometimes call them. "All the publicans and sinners" drew near unto Jesus "for to hear Him."

2. *And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This Man receives sinners, and eats with them.* "See," they said, "what kind of a ministry this must be that attracts all these low people? In what a condition must

be the mind of this Man who seems pleased to associate with such people as these!"

3. *And He spoke this parable unto them, saying.*—Our Savior's aim was to show them that the first objective of God is to find the lost, that His first thoughts are toward the guilty and the fallen that He may bless and save them. "He spoke this parable unto them saying."

4. *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost, until he finds it?* Is not the shepherd's first thought concerning the one lost sheep? For the time, anxiety about that lost one swallows up the consideration of the 99 that are in safe keeping! And he goes "after that which is lost, until he finds it."

5, 6. *And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.* He did not say, "Rejoice with me over the 99 that were never lost," but, for the time, all his anxiety and, afterwards, all his joy, centered upon the lost one.

7. *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.* The mercy of God shall seem, as it were, to swallow up every other attribute, and His great heart shall rejoice to the fullest over repenting sinners!

8. *Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she loses one piece, does not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she finds it.* The woman's candle and broom and eyes are all for this one lost piece of silver! She does not look, just now, at the other nine pieces. They are, at present, left in a safe place by themselves, and she is thinking only of this lost piece.

9. *And when she has found it, she calls her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.* She does not rejoice one half so distinctly and markedly over the nine pieces which were not lost, as she does over the one piece that had been lost, but now is found.

10. *Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.* Our Savior, you see, is still keeping on the same tack and showing that He was right in associating with the publicans and sinners, since He aimed at finding and reclaiming and saving them. He now goes on with a third most beautiful and instructive parable.

11-15. *And He said, A certain man had two sons and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in need. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* That was the best the citizen of the far country could do for the prodigal! The devil's best is always bad—

what must his worst be? If he sets his favorites the employment of feeding swine, what will he do with them when the time of his favor is over and they are forever in his power?

16. *And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.* Here was the free and easy gentleman who had spent his thousands without a thought, and now, "no man gave unto him." I do not know that this prodigal spent his living with harlots—the Scripture does not say that he did. It was his elder brother who said that and he may have made out the case to be even worse than it was. He was simply a waster of his substance in riotous living—and that was bad enough. But I never find that the younger brother tried to set himself right and repudiate the slanderous accusation of the elder. It was not worthwhile for him to try to do so, for he was right with his father and he would get right with his elder brother, by-and-by. If you get right with God, my dear Friend, even if some Christian people should not believe in you, never mind about that! Even if they should think you worse than you have been, never mind! If you are right with God, you will be right with them in due time.

17. *And when he came to himself.*—For he had journeyed into a far country and he had gone as far away from himself as he had gone from his father! But, "when he came to himself."

17-22. *He said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son. But the father said to His servants.*—As much as to say—"Let me hear no more of this, my Son! I cannot bear it. You break my heart with the story of your repentance." "The father said to His servants."

22. *Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.* "Dress him like a gentleman! Do not let it be seen that he ever was in rags—'Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.'"

23. *And bring here the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry.* "Do all that you can to make this poor broken heart happy again, to lift this poor fallen son into the sphere from which he has been away so long. Make him feel at home 'and let us eat, and be merry.'"

24. *For this, my son, was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.* I have no information that they ever left off being merry. The Church of God never ceases to praise and bless the Lord for saved sinners. If you come to Christ, dear Friend, you will set bells a-ringing that will never leave off throughout eternity! "They began to be merry."

25, 26. *Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the*

servants and asked what these things meant. Perhaps he was not very musical and did not care much for joy and delight. He may have been a hard-working, plodding man, but not a happy one.

27, 28. *And he said unto him, Your brother is come; and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in; therefore came his father out, and entreated him.* I scarcely know where the father's love is the more seen—in falling on the neck of the younger son, or in going out to entreat this elder son who was in a pet because the returned prodigal had been welcomed so kindly.

29. *And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.* He seems to say, "I have had no joy of religion. I have been a good, steady, moral person, but my soul has had no high delights."

30. *But as soon as this, your son, was come, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf.* "Not even a little lamb or kid of the goats for me, but a fatted calf for him!" So some still say, "There has been a revival and some of the worst people in the parish have been brought to Christ. But we, who have always gone to church and always were moral and upright, have not had half the joy of these new converts. No fuss has been made over us—all the rejoicing is over the returning prodigals." Do you see your portraits, any of you? If so, may you soon be set right by the only One who can make you what you ought to be!

31. *And he said unto him, Son, you are ever with me, and all that I have is yours.* "Everything I have is yours. If you have not had the kid you spoke of, it was your own fault—you might have taken it if you had pleased. The whole house is at your disposal. I never denied you anything. All that I have is yours.'"

32. *It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad.* See, the younger son did not speak for himself—there was no need for him to do so. His father spoke for him. What a blessed Intercessor, what a wondrous Advocate we have with our elder Brother! We may well leave them alone, ourselves, for He will bring them right—"It was meet that we should make merry and be glad."

32. *For this your brother, was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—551, 607, 571.

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

DEADNESS AND QUICKNING
NO. 2521

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 13, 1897.
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 29, 1885.

"Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way."
Psalm 119:37.

David, when he wrote these words, was in downright earnest. There were times with him when he grew lukewarm and cold and then we remember that he soon fell into grievous sin. But at the time when he was penning this verse, his spirit was lively, active and energetic—then it was that he prayed thus carefully about himself—"Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way." If you read the preceding verse, you will notice that he was thinking of the reality and depth and power of true religion, for he prayed, "Incline my heart unto Your testimonies and not to covetousness," by which he evidently wished that his whole soul might be set upon things Divine, that, as misers seek after gold and store it up, and feast their eyes upon it, so he might be eager after the things of God and might store them up, making them to be his heavenly delicacies, his peculiar pleasure.

Dear Friends, you know as well as I do that there are many sorts of Christians. I am sorry to say that there are some nominal Christians who are no credit to Christianity—they bear the name of Christians and though I will not say that they are dead—yet certainly they are very sickly and seem ready to die! They stand among the people of God and their names are put down in the Church Book, but if they are spiritually alive, theirs is a very feeble form of life. Their heart is not in God's ways. They are active and energetic when they get into the shop, but they are half asleep when they are in the sanctuary. They leave "footprints on the sands of time" when they are devoting their attention to politics, but when they come to the things of God, they tread so lightly that we cannot tell that they have passed that way! It seems to me to be a horrible thing that many a man should give 15 ounces out of the 16 to the world and yet that he should label himself a Christian because of that one odd ounce which he pretends to give to God! The major part of his being—his very self—runs to turn the mill-wheel of daily care and toil, but there is just a dribble that is supposed to be saved up for Christ.

Let it not be so with you, or with me, dear Friends, but let us pray that our hearts may be inclined to the things of God—that the whole force of our nature may run in a heavenly, spiritual, gracious, holy direction—and that thus we may be epistles written by God's own right hand, "known and read of all men." It is only a man who is in this state of spiri-

tual health and activity who will pray such a prayer as that of our text. It is only he who gets to be so careful about his eyes that he will not look upon sin—and so careful about his daily ways—that he is lively and quick in the things of God.

Hoping and believing that I am addressing many such earnest active Christians, I suggest that we, dear Brothers and Sisters, consider this double prayer. First, it seems to me that *David, here, prays for deadness in one direction.* "Lord, make me dead to vanity." And, secondly, *he prays for life in another direction.* "Quicken me in Your way Lord, make me alive to those things that are true and real, lasting and eternal!"

I. First, DAVID, HERE, PRAYS FOR DEADNESS IN ONE DIRECTION—deadness to the world, that he may be so dead to it that he will not even look at it. "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity." He wants to be so clean delivered from the love of worldly things that he may not count them worth even a glance. So far from pursuing them with his feet, or laboring for them with his hands, or going after them with his heart, he thinks them not worth a thought and prays God of His Grace to turn away his eyes from even looking upon them.

What do you think the Psalmist means, here, by, *vanity*? I think he probably means four things, or one thing which may be seen under four aspects. Many a Christian prays, "Lord, turn away my eyes from beholding vanity," that is, *frivolity.* To some men, life is all trifling—they are the butterflies of God's garden, alighting on flowers, but never sucking the honey out of them. They just dance their little hour in the sunbeam of existence, as the gnats do on a summer's evening. They come, they dance, they die—and that is the end of them so far as this life is concerned. Even in our way there will frequently come frivolous things. I do not say that Christians are to disregard all trifles, or that there are not things, very trifling in themselves, which may be sanctified and used for purposes of restoration and recreation, and so be made beneficial to us.

But I do say *this*—if a man, calling himself a Christian, should *live* for mere frivolity—if to him life should be all play and no work, a daydream and not a battle. If he should make his life to be, as the poet puts it—

"Like ocean into tempest tossed,
To waft a feather, or to drown a fly,"

it is a sad pity, it is a grievous evil that it should be so! I believe that there are many professing Christians who are spending their lives in drawing up buckets full of nothing because they let them down into dry wells. They have nothing particular to do and they do it very diligently—and nothing else. They spend their years, from the beginning of January to the end of December, like a tale that is told.

Now, instead of acting thus, the man who leads the true life, the heroic life, the real life, makes everything sublime, and his prayer is that his eyes may be turned away from beholding frivolities. We have put away childish things, for Christ has made us men. We cannot be decoyed, again, into kindergarten, to learn those "beggarly elements of the world" that are only fit for tiny children. We are on the confines of the eternal state. We are standing, even now, hard by the frontier of the

Glory Land. Christ has bought us with His blood and the trumpets of His coming are already sounding in our ears! God forbid that we should sleep, as others do, and toy and play as so many around us do! Our prayer is, "Turn away our eyes from beholding vanity." We have something better to do than to make this world into a mere theater and to let it be true of us that this life is only a play, with men and women as the actors in it. No—

"Life is real, life is earnest,"

now that we have been quickened by the Spirit of God and have entered into the life of God!

I think there is also another meaning in this word, vanity, namely, *carnality*. You know, Beloved, that the things of this life belong to the flesh—they are seen, tasted, handled and felt. But then, the things that are seen are temporal—the things that can be touched and of which the senses are cognizant—are all passing away. These things that we see, taste, grasp and hold are but for time. They are all going. Men think that *spiritual* things are dreams and that temporal things are realities—but it is the other way around—the things that are not seen are eternal! These invisible things shall last forever! When eyes are blind in the grave and ears are deaf beneath the sod, then shall the invisible become the more real to us—when eyes and ears and mere earthly senses have passed away from us.

Sometimes the Christian man gets into this state when he asks, "What shell I eat? What shall I drink and with what shall I be clothed?" I cannot and I do not want to be asking and answering those questions forever. "After all these things do the Gentiles seek." I am now of a higher race than the mere worldling! There is another life now flowing in my veins. I cannot live for these temporal things. I may use them, but I must not abuse them. I may have them under my feet, but I must not permit them to crush me and to be above my head. I can float over them, as a ship sails over the sea, but I cannot let them into myself, for that were to sink the ship, as when the vessel ships a great sea and begins to go down with the weight. I must not let my heart be troubled, even though my head may sometimes seem to be. No, a Christian man turns right away from what, to other men, seems the most important business of life, and he says, "Lord, it is all vanity to me." To children of God, these things seem so frail, so fleeting as to be scarcely worth a thought! And we get away into our chamber and shut the door—and we speak in secret to our Father who sees in secret. And then all things apart from Him grow to be mere vanity, smoke, folly and sin. We cannot be always pestered with these daily cares. No, Lord, turn away our eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken us in Your way!

I think, however, that the Psalmist means even more than that and, perhaps, still more forcibly, this third thing. "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity," that is, *falsehood,* for that is what he means by vanity, that which seems to be something, but really is nothing. That bubble from the child's soap and pipe looks as if it were a solid creation of rainbows, but it is gone in almost less time than you can think! And there

are many things in the world just like that, especially at this present time. We have new doctrines being preached and new "oligies" being taught which are nothing but lies! There is not as much real substance in them as there is in a soap bubble. When certain false doctrines are being preached, there are some people who are very anxious to know at once what they are. They are curious to see and to know everything! They would be much wiser if they would pray with David, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity."

If you can read a tainted book that denies the Inspiration of the Scriptures and attacks the Truth of God and, if you derive any profit from it, you must be a very different being from myself! I have to read such books. I *must* read them, sometimes, to know what is said by *the enemies of the Gospel*, that I may defend the faith and help the weaklings of the flock—but it is a sorry business. When those who are qualified to do so are reading these heretical works, if they are really doing it in the fear of God for the good of their fellow men, they remind me of Sir James Simpson and the two other doctors when they discovered the medical and surgical value of chloroform. They sat at the table, and scarcely knew what was going to happen, but they each took a dose, risking their lives by so doing! And when they came back to consciousness, they had certainly made a great discovery.

But, dear Friends, I do not feel that I am required to take all the drugs and poisons in the world, one after another, just for the sake of testing and trying them that I may come and tell you all about their effects! If I did, probably one of these times I would not come back to you and that would be the end to that business. It is all very well for Sir James Simpson and other eminent physicians and surgeons to make such experiments, for it is part of the duty of their profession, but it is not for the bulk of us to do so. When you go home tonight, I should recommend you to eat for supper those kinds of food which you have been accustomed to eat and which your fathers ate before you, to the building up of the physical frame! And if anybody comes and says to you, "Here is some very wonderful food! There is no telling what effect it will have upon you, it may make you turn into horses." I do not know why you should not turn into horses if the doctrine of evolution is true—"here is food that is to evolve you into something very marvelous." But you say to the man, "Keep it yourself, my dear Sir. I would not deprive you of it, for I am not at all ambitious of trying such things."

I do believe that it is good for a child of God, when he has found honey, to eat it. And if anyone calls out, "Here is something still sweeter," let him answer, "You may keep it for yourself. I am perfectly satisfied with what I have—honey is sweet enough for me." If I had gathered manna in the morning in the wilderness and somebody had cried out to me, "Here, I have found a wonderful fungus, a brilliant mushroom, and I am going to make my breakfast of it," I would have replied, "Well, my Friend, inasmuch as this manna came down from Heaven, it came from the best place I know of. And I feel perfectly satisfied to eat angels' food. It exactly suits me and it has suited me so long that I will not deprive you

of all the mushrooms you can find. So far as I am concerned, you may have your fungi and fatten yourself up on them, or kill yourself with them if you are so insane as to eat them, but they are not fit food for me."

In just that fashion, dear Friends, my mind is made up about the things of God! And concerning all the poisonous novelties that are introduced so freely nowadays, I pray to the Lord, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way."

I am sure also that David had a fourth meaning to the word, vanity, and that it included, not only falsehood, but wickedness in every form. From that, we are to turn even our eyes away. Do you hear that anything is evil? Touch it not, taste it not, handle it not! Look not upon it, keep far away from it. Is there a plague from Hell let loose among the sons of men? My Son, go not near the infected region! If it is the house of the strange woman, or any other haunt of vice, however enchanting the amusement, however alluring the attractions—turn not in that direction—do not even *look* that way! With Peter, I would cry, "Dearly Beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." Young man, I pray you, quit the place of danger even though you must leave your garment behind you, as Joseph did—stay not even to see what it is that would fascinate you! One look from the serpent's eyes may fix you to the spot where you shall be destroyed! Therefore I say to you, as the angels said to Lot, "Escape for your life! Look not behind you, neither stay in all the plain! Escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed."

What have you and I to do—with such gunpowder hearts as ours—where the sparks of temptation are flying? Let us, if we can, keep wholly clear of the dangers of the present day! If there is but the *smell* of sin about anything, say at once, "This is not for me. I am a child of God and what another man might do, I could not do, I must not do, I will not do, I scorn to do! My Lord clothed me in the snow-white vestments of a priest unto the Most High God, on that day when He taught me to wash my robes in the blood of the Lamb—and the slightest speck will stain my new garment, which might not show upon another man's apparel. Therefore, I must not, I *dare not* go near the mire, but I must stay clear of it and pick my way with care along the King's Highway."

Dear Friends, look not towards any sin, for looking breeds longing, and longing begets lusting, and lusting brings sinning! Keep your eyes right and you may keep your heart right. If that first woman had not looked upon the forbidden tree and seen "that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise," she would not have plucked and eaten of the fruit—and we would not have been the children of sorrow. O Lord, turn away my eyes, for if You will keep my eyes right, then shall I be altogether right. "The light of the body is the eye. If, therefore, your eyes are single, your whole body shall be full of light," so that, if the eyes are kept right, all is well. O Lord, keep my eyes right! Turn them away from beholding vanity in all these forms—frivolity, carnality, falsehood, wickedness!

When the Psalmist prayed this prayer, he *felt that his eyes were inclined to go this way,* otherwise he would not have said, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity." It is much as when a child is having his portrait taken and he is told by the photographer to look in one particular direction, but there is something in the street that amuses him and draws off his gaze that way. The soldiers are passing the window and he looks at them—and you have to fix his little head fast to get him to look the right way. So the Psalmist seems to say, "Lord, make me to look the right way. Do not let me be attracted to look out there to spoil the picture of my life. Turn away my eyes. Hold my head fast and make me look the right way. Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity."

It was David's tendency to look that way—is it not also your tendency and mine? Oh, sadly let us confess that we are too much attracted by that which is foolish and vain! I know that I cannot remember good things as well as I can evil things—some abominable saying that I heard as I was passing along in the street will stick by me for years—while many a gracious sentiment is blown away from me by the first breeze that comes! If you do not feel the force of natural depravity in your heart, I think it must be through lack of power or willingness to feel! Alas, we seem to drink up sin readily enough, but we have to, with care, put good and true thoughts into our minds. This river of our life brings down plenty of snags. The old dead trees from the evil country come floating down the stream, but seldom do they bring to our door a log of the cedars of Lebanon. Such good wood is scarce in this river! But its torrent seems to bear along all that is base and vile! We have need to cry much to God, for the set of the current of the old nature is all the wrong way. We find another law in our members warring against the law of our mind and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin and death, so that we have to cry with Paul, "O wretched man that I am!" And with David, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity."

The Psalmist, in the next place, *knew the evil of a growing familiarity with vanity.* He prayed, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity," because he knew by experience that you cannot go near vanity without being drawn nearer, and then a little nearer, and then a little nearer, still! For the most part, men do not fall into great sin by sudden surprises. It is sometimes so, but usually there are several descending platforms and the descent is made by slow degrees. When King David walked upon the top of his house, that fatal evening, and saw Bathsheba washing herself, if he had been in a right state of heart, as in former times, he would, with all delicacy, have at once retreated from the sight. But he had grown cold and dull in spirit for months—perhaps for years—and that incident was but the match to fire the fuel which had been so long in the drying and which, once kindled, burned to such a fearful conflagration. The sin itself seemed to come upon him all of a sudden, but the *preparation for the sin* had been in the making long before!

O Friends, if we begin to look upon iniquity, we shall almost certainly fall! There are some sins that we poor, frail creatures cannot endure to look at. We are as moths near a burning candle—the only safety for us is

to get out of the room and fly into the open air. But if we stop near the light, we shall certainly burn our wings and, perhaps, even destroy ourselves. So we must take care that we do not get used to sin. I believe that even the common reading in the newspapers of accounts of evil things is defiling to us and if we habitually read such things, we shall come, at last, to think less and less of the coarser forms of vice than we ought to do. It is said that "familiarity breeds contempt." So it does where heavenly things become familiar to those who have no spiritual perceptions—but it also breeds a hardness of conscience—a sort of hardness where there ought to be delicacy.

I have heard of blind persons, accustomed to read by touch, who have had to sand the tips of their fingers in order to secure sufficient feeling to make out the raised letters. Familiarity with sin covers the fingers of the conscience with a hard skin so that we do not feel as we ought. Do not some of you know, when you began to associate with worldly people—when, for instance, for the first time you went to an evening party—you came home and felt that you could not pray? And you said to yourself, "This will not do. I must keep away from such society in the future. But oh, how shall I get back to my God? I cannot bear to be in this state of heart." But now, alas, you can go into such company and enjoy it—you are just as worldly as any of them! And yet your condition does not trouble you at all. I spoke with one who used to be a member of this Church—a truly spiritual man he always seemed to me, but he had left to attend another ministry—a ministry, I am afraid, in which there was not much of the savor of Christ. And I said to him, "Well, you like your new minister?" "Yes," he answered. "And does your soul prosper?" I asked. "My dear Sir," he replied, "I do not think, for these last three or four years, that I have known whether I had a soul or not." That is a dreadful state to get into! When this friend first of all united with us in Church fellowship, he would have started back with horror from such a condition!

And you, also, can grow so thoughtless and careless that, at last, you will do things you never would have dreamed of doing before. Therefore, it is good to begin with such a prayer as this, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity, lest I look, and looking, I come to look with admiration. And looking further, I come to look with desire. And looking further, still, I look myself into Hell." Let your prayer begin at the root of the evil and have nothing whatever to do with it. Pluck out your eyes sooner than look at sin, for it were better for you to enter into life blind than that, having two eyes, you should bring yourself into Hell fire by your sin! So says the Savior and He cannot err!

The Psalmist, therefore, *would have* none *of this vanity* and nothing whatever to do with it because he could not tell how far he might be drawn if once he began to look upon evil. And observe, too, that *he craved Divine help.* It shows the pitiful weakness of our nature and the way in which David, an eminent saint, felt that weakness when even *he* cried to God, "Turn away my eyes." But man, can you not turn away your own eyes? Of course he can, yet let no man here trust to himself to turn

away his own eyes from sin! Let him put the case into higher hands than his own, crying, "Lord, I am so frail, so fallible, so feeble, so liable to fall, that You must be the custodian of my eyes, or else my eyes will be my destruction. Superintend my eyes, Lord! Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity." I like this prayer of David because it shows his perfect dependence upon his God.

Then observe that *he expects God to help him in a particular way.* "Turn away my eyes." He does not say, "Put out my eyes, O Lord!" But he prays, "Let me look another way—a better way." The way not to be affected by sin is to look at something else. He that will see death and become familiar with the grave will learn to turn his eyes away from vanity. He that will see Heaven and think of its splendors will turn his eyes away from vanity. He that will look at Hell and the place appointed for the wicked will turn away his eyes from vanity.

But, Beloved, there is a better cure than any of these. If you have fixed your eyes on Christ, the Crucified, the risen, the exalted, the soon to come—if your eyes are taken up with Him, you shall find that passage true in many senses—"Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Salvation from a wandering, frivolous mind is to be found in looking at Christ by holy meditation! Nothing can keep us away from the fangs of error like falling into the embraces of Christ. Looking unto Jesus is the great remedy against looking unto sin! Turn away my eyes from vanity, my Lord, by filling them full with a vision of Yourself and holding me spellbound with that grandest spectacle that eyes of men, or angels, or even of God, Himself, did ever see—the spectacle of God Incarnate bearing our sin in His own body on the Cross! Keep your eyes fixed there and all will be well!

II. So much, then, for David's prayer for deadness. Now I have less time—as I intended—for the second division of my subject. Having prayed for deadness in one direction, DAVID PRAYS FOR LIFE IN ANOTHER DIRECTION. About 13 years ago I preached from the latter part of this text and the sermon is still extant, so I can be all the briefer now. (Sermon #1072, Volume 18—*My Prayer—read/download the entire sermon for free at http://www.spurgeongems.org*). "Quicken me in Your way." Let us dwell for a little on this prayer of David and try to pray it ourselves.

First, it is clear from this text that *the Psalmist was in God's way.* Dear Friend, if you are *not* in God's way, may He bring you into it at once! There is but one gate into that way. Over it is inscribed, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." As soon as you do that, you are in the way directly, for He *is* the Way. He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the *life."* The first thing is to get into God's way—but that is not all.

In the next place, those who are in God's way are to pray that they may have *increasing life while they are in that way.* Little can be done in God's way without life—His way is not a way of death, for, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." We must be living men, living in God's way, if we would run in that way! Suppose God's way to be faith. We must not have a dead faith, otherwise we shall be deceived. The faith which works has life in it—it is that living faith which changes the life

and produces good works. Lord, quicken me in my faith! Deliver me, O my God, from having a dead faith in a living Savior! O Lord, give me a living faith that shall operate on my whole life in all respects to Your glory!

There is God's way of service as well as God's way of faith and how can we serve the living God with dead works? How can a dead man serve God at all? I am afraid there is a good deal of dead preaching, dead praying, dead praising—and God does not count it as anything at all. It is only the living discourse that comes from the heart and the living Psalm that wells up from a grateful spirit, and the living prayer which comes from a soul that hungers and thirsts after God that He can accept. We must have life if we are to serve God. Quicken me, O Lord, in the way of Your service! You, dear Friend, are going to teach a Sunday school class next Lord's Day. Pray, "Lord, quicken me to teach the children! Let me do it in a living way." You, my dear Brother, are going to stand up at the street corner and speak for Christ in the open air. Pray, "Lord, quicken me in bearing living testimony to Your living Truth!" It is all-important not to serve God half-asleep, but it can be done very easily. I believe that if it were proper, I could preach a very dull, sleepy sermon—snore it, in fact—and then I believe that I should set all of you snoring most devoutly all through the place! I have seen the thing done, figuratively, if not literally—the minister asleep, deacons asleep, the members asleep, the hearers asleep—everything done very properly, very regularly, very orderly, never a jar or a jolt, but all sound asleep! God save us from ever coming to that condition! Let the prayer of each of us be, "Quicken me in the way of Your service, O Lord!"

"Quicken me, also, in the way of devotion." It is a sad thing to try to pray when you feel sleepy in prayer—then is the time to cry, "Lord, help me to pray as if I were carrying the gates of Heaven by storm! Help me to draw near to You with my whole heart and soul. If I am alive at anything, let it be in my devotions. If I am dead anywhere, let it be in the world. But if I am alive anywhere, let it be when I draw near to You, my God!" This ought to be the prayer of each of us, "Quicken me, O Lord, in the way of devotion!" And as to God's way of holiness, may you and I be made so thoroughly alive in it that we shall do nothing that has not upon it the mark of, "Holiness unto the Lord!"

Yet once more, observe that *nobody but God can give us this life in God's way.* All life comes from Him, but especially is this the case with spiritual life. The sculptor can make the marble seem to breathe, but he cannot breathe life into it! And you and I may do and *ought* to do much for ourselves, but in the matter of real life, that must come from God alone. Let us, then, cry unto Him, "Quicken me in Your way, O Lord!"

Lastly, *we often need this quickening.* They who were thus quickened yesterday need to be quickened again today! He who burned with zeal a week ago, needs to have fresh oil poured into his lamp continually, else it will soon burn dim. There was never a man, yet, who had such a store of Grace that he could afford to do without constantly resorting to God for more. "Quicken me, quicken me, quicken me," is the prayer of the soul when it first begins to live! It is the prayer of the Christian when he gets

into the stern struggles of life and the poisonous damps of the world! And the prayer of the Christian when he is about to die, is still, "Quicken me, O Lord, quicken me in Your way! O Life of life, be life to me! O Spirit of God, breathe into me power, vigor, force, energy! Give me all these by giving me Yourself to be my life."

I invite each one of you personally to offer this prayer, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way." It is the preacher's prayer. Let each of us who preach the Gospel ask God to keep the dust out of our eyes and make us full of spiritual life, for, if we are not filled with heavenly life, we shall be a curse to our people instead of a blessing. This prayer is also most suitable for you who are workers for Christ—"Quicken me in Your way." You know how I sometimes illustrate the truth that hard work cannot be done except by strong people. If we were going to make a railway tunnel through a hill, the contractor would not go to Brampton Hospital and pick out a hundred poor consumptives. Just imagine him trying to do it! He says, "There, my men, are the picks and the spades, go and tunnel through that hill." Why, they are panting and groaning in the effort to carry the tools! They will never get through that hill—all the picks and all the spades will be of no use to them!

But let the man get a hundred good strong English laborers and they seem to bore a way through the hill while you are talking about it! And, before long, the whole work is done and the train is puffing through the tunnel. So, if you Christian workers keep up to the mark, "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," you will tunnel a way through the mass of London's sin! But if you are not spiritually strong, what can you do against the enormous evils of London, of England and of the whole world? We shall have to be getting elixirs and tonics to strengthen you and all the time of the Church will be taken up in patting you on the back and trying to comfort you! You had better go back to the hospital and pray, "O Lord, quicken me in Your way!" May God speedily make you stronger! But while you are so weak you cannot do this great work, for it needs those who are spiritually strong to serve the Lord with the utmost vigor.

But if any are sufferers rather than workers, each of them, also, needs to pray this prayer, "O Lord, quicken me in Your way!" You can endure pain, you can bear poverty, you can suffer almost anything when God quickens you in His way. But these burdens grow more heavy when the soul is at a distance from the Lord. Have any of you backslidden? Have you stolen in here after having long wandered away from your Lord? Well, here is a prayer for you, also, "Quicken me in Your way." Have any of you felt this week that you are getting into the rear rank of the army of life and that your life is ebbing away? Then cry to the Lord, "Quicken me! Quicken me." "Oh," says one, "I am full of doubts." Yes, when you are sick and ill, you begin to doubt. But pray, "Quicken me. Quicken me."

Perhaps some poor sinner here is saying, "I wish I could be saved." Well, this text may be a guide to you. Keep far off from everything that is sinful! Get out of the way of Satan! And pray to the Lord, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way." Do not come

and hear sermons and then go into places of amusement where you forget them—but let each one of us bow before the living Christ and pray, "O Lord Jesus, quicken me by Your blessed Spirit! There is such a thing as spiritual life—breathe it into me. I am a poor dead soul. If I have any life at all, I have only enough life to perceive that I am as one dead—

'If aught is felt, 'tis only pain
To find I cannot feel.
Oh make this heart rejoice or ache
Decide this doubt for me.
And, if it is not broken, break
And heal it, if it be.'

'Quicken me, O Lord, quicken me!'" And He will do it, for He has declared, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." May we all come to Him, now, and then shall we all meet in the Glory Land, by-and-by, through His Grace! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:33-40.

We have here some of the jottings from David's pocketbook, the notes of his experience as recorded in his diary. The whole Psalm is a great case full of golden rings. They all fit, one into the other, but each ring is also perfect in itself!

Verse 33. *Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.* We forget what others teach us, but we never forget what God truly teaches us. He who has been graciously taught will finally persevere.

34. *Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your Law; yes, I shall observe it with my whole heart.* This is the great point as to thorough godliness—to observe God's Law with our whole heart. In these days, there is much slurring in religious matters, but they who love God aright love Him with their whole heart and they are careful, even, in what others call, "little things." Live unto God with the utmost heartiness, exactness and precision every moment! "The Lord your God is a jealous God." Therefore, serve Him with great jealousy and sincerity of spirit.

35. *Make me to go in the path of Your Commandments; for therein do I delight.* And when a man delights to do that which is right, God will help him to do it! The Psalmist seems to speak like a little child who has not found the use of his limbs yet. He says, "Make me to go; take hold of me, as a nurse does of her charge, and enable me to take my first trembling, tottering footsteps. Make me to go, for I delight to go. Lord, help me to carry out my soul's desire."

36. *Incline my heart unto Your testimonies, and not to covetousness.* "Make me covetous for holiness! Let that passion which, in other men, goes after gold and silver, in me run after obedience and fellowship with You, my God. Incline my heart in another way than nature would incline it—nature puts it on the left hand and makes me covetous—my God, put my heart on my right side, that I may seek only after You and after holiness."

37. *Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way.* The Psalmist commends all his nature to the care of his God. Just now he prayed about his feet. Then, about his heart. Now, about his eyes. We need the sanctifying Grace of God in every faculty of our spiritual manhood lest we go astray one way when we are watching against sin in another direction. It matters little at which gate a city is captured, if it is taken at all, it is taken. Oh, for Grace to watch every portal of the town of Mansoul lest we be overcome at any point!

38. *Establish Your Word unto Your servant who is devoted to Your fear.* "Lord, make Your Word to stand fast to me, for I do love You, I am in Your fear. Your fear has become part of me." If you notice, the words, "is *devoted,"* are put in by the translators. The verse should read, "Who to Your fear," as if his whole self had run into the mold and shape of a God-fearing man. He asks God, therefore, to establish His Word unto him, and so He did. What David asked, David's God gave.

39. *Turn away my reproach which I fear: for Your judgments are good.* "Lord, never let me sin so as to bring a reproach upon Your holy name! Keep me from doing anything that would grieve You and cause Your enemies to blaspheme."

40. *Behold, I have longed after Your precepts.* That is a sure sign of a true child of God. Hypocrites may long after the *promises,* but only the true-born child of God longs after the *precepts*. If your chief desire is to be holy, that is a desire which comes from the Spirit of God. A bad man may desire to go to Heaven. A desperately wicked man may wish to die the death of the righteous. But he who intensely longs to live a godly, righteous life is, indeed, the subject of Divine Grace. I am sure that there are some of us here who can say that we have made no bargains with God, nor put in any conditions whatever—if He will but help us to live holy lives, He may do what He wills with us! Our one desire is this—"Behold, I have longed after Your precepts."

40. *Quicken me in Your righteousness.* Let that be the prayer of every-one of us. Amen.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK —72 (SONG 2), 463, 465.

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

"AFTER TWO DAYS IS THE PASSOVER"
NO. 2522

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 20, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 1, 1885.

"You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."
Matthew 26:2.

One likes to know how a great commander feels before a battle. What is his state of mind and how does he look forward to tomorrow's struggle? While yet the balances are trembling, how does he act? How does he bear himself? One likes to know the condition of heart of one's fellow in the prospect of a great trial. There is a serious operation to be performed—how is the sufferer supported in the prospect of the surgeon's knife and of the danger that will attend it? Or, perhaps, death itself is rapidly approaching—in what condition of heart is our departing friend? How does he anticipate the great change? I take it that it is sometimes much harder to look upon a battle than to fight one—more difficult to foresee an ill than it is to bear it and, perhaps, the foresight, even, of death is much more trying than death itself ever proves to be to a Christian. Can we be confident before the battle begins? Can we be calm before the clouds burst in the time of storm? Can we rest in God before the iron gate is opened and we pass through it into the unknown world? These are questions well worth asking.

I thought that it would be very profitable to us if we tried to look at our Master in this condition—the great Captain of our salvation before the battle—the great Sacrifice led to the altar where His blood is about to be shed. How does He behave Himself? May there not be something especially instructive in these last Words of His, when He seems, as it were, to take off the robes of the Teacher and Prophet and to put on His priestly garments? May there not be something for us to learn from the state of His mind and spirit—and from His language just before His Passion? It is a small window, but a great deal of the Light of God may come through it. The Master said to His disciples, "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

I. The first thing I would say upon these words to you, Beloved in Christ Jesus, is, ADMIRE YOUR SAVIOR. Hear Him speak and regard Him in holy contemplation, that admiration of Him may be greatly excited.

Admire *His calmness.* There is no token of any disturbance of mind. There are no evidences of dismay. There is not even a quiver of fear, nor the least degree of anxiety about Him. He speaks not boastfully, otherwise we would suspect that He was not brave. He speaks very solemnly,

for it was a terrible ordeal that lay before Him. Look at it as He might, but still, with what true peace of mind, in what tones of quiet serenity, does He say to His little band of followers, "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

This calmness is very wonderful, because there was so much that was bitter and cruel about His approaching death. "The Son of Man is betrayed." The Savior felt that betrayal most keenly. It was a very bitter part of the deadly potion which He had to drink. "He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me," was a venomous drop that went right into His soul! David, in his great sorrow, had to say, "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him; but it was you, a man my equal, my guide, and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked into the house of God in company." And it was a very, very, very bitter thing to Christ to be betrayed by Judas, yet He talks of it calmly and speaks of it when it was not absolutely necessary, one would think, to mention that incidental circumstance. He might have said, "In two days I shall be crucified," but He said, "In two days the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

Do not forget, also, the extraordinary bitterness that is concentrated in that word, "crucified." Somehow, we have become used to the Cross—and the Glory which surrounds our Lord has taken away from our minds much of the shame which is and should always be associated with the gallows. The cross was the hangman's gallows of those days—it implied all the shame that the gallows could imply with us, today, and more, for a freeman may be hanged, but crucifixion was a death reserved for slaves! Nor was it merely the *shame* of crucifixion, but it was the great *pain* of it. It was an exquisitely cruel death in which the body was tormented for a considerable length of time to the very highest degree. The nails passing through the flesh just where the nerves are most plentiful and tearing and rending through those parts of the body by the weight which had to be sustained on hands and feet caused torture of a kind which I will not attempt to describe. Beside that, remember, veiled beneath the words, "to be crucified," lay our Savior's *inward and spiritual crucifixion*, for His Father's forsaking of Him was the essence—the extreme gall of the bitterness that He endured. He meant that He had to die upon the accursed tree, deserted even by His Father! Yet He talked of it, truly and with all solemnity, but yet without the slightest trace of trembling. "You know," He said to His disciples, "that in two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

Admire, then, the calm, brave heart of your Divine Lord, conscious—far more conscious than you and I can be—of what was meant by being betrayed and being crucified! Cognizant of every pang that should ever come upon Him—the bloody sweat, the scourge, the crown of thorns, the fevered thirst, the tongue cleaving to the roof of His mouth and all the dust of death that would surround and choke Him—yet He speaks of it as though it were no more an unusual event than the Passover itself. "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

I want you to admire, next, your Savior's *strong resolve*—His resolute purpose to go through all this suffering that He might effect our redemption. If He had willed it, He might have paused, He might have gone back, He might have given up the enterprise. You know how the Flesh, in sight of all that pain and grief, cried, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me," but here we see, before the Passion came, that strong and firm and brave resolve which, when the Passion did come, would not, could not and *did not* flinch or hesitate, much less turn back! He could sweat great drops of blood, but He could not give up the work He came to do. He could bow His head to death, but He could not and would not cease to love His people whom He loved so much as to end His life for their sakes upon the accursed tree! Here are no regrets and no faltering. Our Lord speaks as you and I would speak of something about which our mind is quite made up, concerning which there is no room for argument or debate. "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified." If He had said, "After two years," I could understand something of His purpose concerning an event that was so distant—but within two days to be betrayed, within 48 hours to be betrayed for crucifixion—and yet to talk of it so! O my Lord, truly Your love for us is strong as death, Your jealousy overcomes even the grave itself!

Admire Him, then, dear Friends! Let your inmost heart adore and love Him! But I want you to also notice *how absorbed He was in His approaching betrayal and death.* That Truth of God comes out in the words of our text—"You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified." Ah, dear Lord, You did speak the truth! They did know it and yet You did speak to them with loving partiality, for they did not really know it. They did not as yet understand that their Master must die and that He would rise again from the dead. He had often repeated to them the assurance that it would be so, but, somehow, they had not truly believed it, realized it, grasped it. Ah, but *He* had! He had and, you know, it is the way of men who have realized a great truth to talk to others as if it were as real to them as to themselves. You remember how the spouse asks the watchmen of the city, "Saw you Him whom my soul loves?" She does not tell them any name, but she talks of her Beloved as if there were no other, "Him," in all the world! And the Lord here so well knew and was so wholly absorbed in the great work before Him that He said to these forgetful, these ignorant disciples, "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

Why, they had only a little while before walked with Him through the streets of Jerusalem! The people had strewn the road with their garments and with branches of palm trees! Scarcely had the sound of their hosannas died away out of the disciples' ears, yet Jesus says to them, "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified; you have not forgotten that, have you?" Ah, but they had! They were still dreaming of an earthly sovereignty and He was dreaming of nothing, but sternly, solemnly setting His face like a flint to go to prison and to death for their redemption—and for yours, and for mine—sacredly resolved to go through with it! He was even "straitened"

till His baptism of blood should be accomplished and He should be immersed in unknown deeps of grist and suffering! Having all His thought taken up with that subject, our Lord, therefore, talked to His disciples as if they were taken up with it, too. This is the language of One who is altogether absorbed with this gigantic enterprise which He has made to be the very summit of His ambition, though He knows that it will involve Him in shame and death. Admire Him, Brothers and Sisters, that He should be so taken up with the passion of winning souls as to forget everything else—and have this only upon His mind, and upon His lips—"After two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

I cannot help adding one other thing in which I admire the Savior and that is, *how wise He was to tell His disciples this!* You see, all He cared for was their good. He was not mentioning His suffering that He might ask for their sympathy. There is no trace of His crying, like Job, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O my Friends, for the hand of God has touched me." No, our Lord told His disciples this for their sakes! First, that they might not be surprised when it came to pass, as though some strange thing had happened to them—that when He was betrayed and crucified, it might not be quite so dire a blighting of all their hopes since He had prepared them for it beforehand. And, moreover, it was intended to strengthen them when they should come into the trial, so that they could say, "It is all just as He told us it would be. How true He is! He told us about this sorrow beforehand and, therefore, if He spoke the truth, then, we will believe all the rest that He said is also true. And did He not say that He would rise again from the dead? Then, depend upon it, He will do so! He died when He said He would die and He will rise again when He said He would rise again." This saying of our Lord was well and wisely uttered, that the crucifixion should not come upon them as a thing unknown to Him, but that when they were in the midst of the trial, they should remember that He told them all about it and so they would be comforted.

I ask you, then, dear Friends, to think with reverent affection of this calm speech of your Divine Master, this resolved and determined utterance, this all-absorbing thought of His concerning the purchase of His people by His blood—and this generous wisdom of His in making it all known beforehand to those who were around about Him and who truly loved Him. I do not want to turn from that thought until you have felt in your own heart this intense admiration of your Lord.

II. But, secondly, I want to take your thoughts a little way—not from the text—but from that particular line of meditation and to ask you, now, to CONSIDER YOUR SACRIFICE.

The Master says, "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified." I cannot help reading it like this—"You know that after two days is THE PASSOVER. All the other Passovers have been Passovers only in name, Passovers in type, Passovers in emblem, Passovers foreshadowing THE Passover. But after two days is the real Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified." At any rate, I want you to notice how true it is that our Lord Jesus Christ is our Passover—"Christ our Passover is sacrificed for

us." What the paschal lamb was to Israel in Egypt, that the Lord Jesus Christ is to us! Let us think of that for a few minutes. Put the Passover and the Cross together, for, indeed, they are one.

And, first, *here is a lamb*. Was there another man who ever lived who was so worthy to be called a lamb, as was Jesus Christ? I have never heard or read of any character that so fully realizes what must be meant by "the Lamb of God." Other men have been like lambs, but there is a touch of the tiger about us all at times. There was none about Him. He was the Lamb of all lambs—the Lamb of God, the most lamb-like of all men who ever lived or died, for there was no trace of anything about Him that was contrary to tenderness, love and gentleness. There were other qualities, of course, but none that were contrary to these. There were some that were as necessary to a complete character as even gentleness was, and He failed in nothing. But still, if you only view Him from that one side of His gentleness, there was none so worthy to be called a Lamb as He.

The lamb of the Passover, however, *had to be perfect*. It must be without spot or blemish. And where can you find the likes of Jesus for spotlessness and perfection in every respect? There is nothing redundant in Him. There is nothing deficient in Him. The Character of the Christ is absolutely perfect, insomuch that His very enemies, who have denied His Deity, have been charmed with His humanity—and those who have even tried to undermine His teaching, have, nevertheless, reverently bowed before His example! He is the Lamb of God "without blemish and without spot."

The paschal lamb also *had to be slain*. You know how Christ was slain. There is no need to dwell upon the sufferings and death of our Well-Beloved. The lamb *had to be roasted with fire.* That was the method by which it was prepared and, truly, Christ our Passover was roasted with fire. Through what fiery sufferings, through what consuming grief did He pass! There was nothing about Him that was soaked at all with water, but every bit of Him was roasted with the fire of human hatred—and also with the Divine and righteous ire of the thrice-holy God!

You remember, too, that in the paschal lamb not *a bone was to be broken.* Our Lord stood in imminent jeopardy of having His bones broken, for with iron bars the Roman soldiers went to break the legs of the three crucified persons, that they might die the more quickly. But John tells us, "When they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they broke not His legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bares record, and his record is true. And he knows what he says is true, that you might believe. For those things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, a bone of Him shall not be broken." And again another Scripture says, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced." In all this is Christ our true Paschal Lamb.

But you know, dear Friends, that the chief point about the paschal lamb lay in *the sprinkling of the blood.* The blood of the lamb was caught in a basin and then the father of the family took a bunch of hyssop, dipped it in the blood, and struck the lintel and the two side posts of the house outside the door. Then, when the destroying angel flew through

the land of Egypt to smite the first-born of men and of cattle, from the first-born of Pharaoh that was on the throne to the first-born of one that was in the dungeon, he passed by every house that was sprinkled with the blood. And these are the Lord's memorable Words concerning that ordinance, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." God's sight of the blood was the reason for His passing over His people and not killing them! And you know, Beloved, that the reason why God does not smite you on account of sin is that He sees the sprinkled blood of Jesus under which you are sheltering. That blood is sprinkled upon you and, as God sees it, He knows that expiation has been made, the substitutionary Sacrifice has been slain and He passes you by! Thus is Christ the true Passover, accepted in your place, and you are saved through Him.

Remember, too, that the paschal lamb *furnished food for a supper.* It was both a security and a feast for the people. The whole family stood round the table that night and ate of the roasted lamb. With bitter herbs did they eat it, as if to remind them of the bitterness of their bondage in Egypt. With their loins girt and with their walking staves in their hands, as men who were about to leave their homes and go on a long journey, never to return—thus they stood and ate the paschal lamb. They all ate it and they ate it all, for not a relic of it must be left until the morning. If there was too much for one family, then others must come in to share it. And if any was left, it must be destroyed by fire. Is not this, dear Friends, just what Christ is to us—our spiritual meat, the food of our souls? We receive a whole Christ and feed upon a whole Christ—often with bitter herbs of repentance and humiliation—but still we feed on Him and we all eat of the same spiritual meat, even as we are all sprinkled with the one precious blood, if, indeed, we are the true Israel of God!

O Beloved, let us bless our Lord for the true Passover! It was a night to be remembered when Israel came out of Egypt, but it is a night to be remembered even more when you and I, by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, are once and for all passed over by the angel of avenging justice and we live when others die—a night to be remembered when our eager lips begin to feed on Him whose flesh is meat, indeed, and we eat and live forever! Is not that the teaching of this text? Did not the Savior mean this when He said, "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified"? These two things are bracketed together, as in mathematics there is a sort of mark of "equals" put between them to signify that the one is equal to the other—the feast of THE Passover, and the fact that the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.

III. Now I turn to a third point and I think I shall have your earnest attention upon it because there is something in it which very deeply interests all of us who belong to Christ. I have already asked you to admire your Savior and to consider your sacrifice. Now, dear Friends, ADORE YOUR LORD.

I ask you to adore your Lord, first, for *His foresight.* "After two days the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified." We cannot prophesy concerning the future. The man who can tell me what will happen in two days must be something more than man. As to many events, it is as difficult to foresee two minutes as to foresee two centuries, unless there are

some causes operating which must produce certain effects. In our Lord's case, the influences seemed all to point away from betrayal and crucifixion. He was extremely popular. To all appearances He was beloved by the mass of the people and even the scribes and Pharisees, who sought His death, were thoroughly afraid of Him! Yet, with that clear foresight of the eyes which shine in no head but that which is Divine, Jesus says, "After two days the Son of Man will be betrayed." He sees it all as if it had already happened. He does not say, "shall be," but He so fully sees it, He is such a true Seer, that He says, "The Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

Now, Beloved, if He thus foresaw His own betrayal and death, let us adore Him, for *He can foresee our trials and death.* He knows all that is going to happen to us. He knows what will happen to me within two days. I bless Him that I do not! I would far rather that the eyes which see into the future should be in His head than in mine—they are safer there. But, Brothers and Sisters, if within two days, or two months, or two years you are to pass through some bitter agony, some scourging and buffering which looks very improbable, now, you may not see that it may be so, but there is One who sees it. The sheep's best eyes are in the shepherd's head. The sheep will do well enough if he can see what is just before him, especially if he can see his shepherd—that is all he needs to see. The shepherd can see into the cold winter. He can see into the wild woods where lurks the wolf. The shepherd can see everything. And I want you, dear Friends, to adore your Lord because if in His *humiliation* He foresaw His betrayal and death—from the vantage ground of His Glory He can now see *your* grief and *your* woes that are yet in reserve. And it ought to be enough for you that He knows all about you! He knows what your difficulty will be and He will pray for you that your faith fail not. Adore your Lord, then, for His foresight.

I want you, next, to adore Him for *His wonderful Providence.* There was a Providence which surrounded the Christ of God at that time. It was according to the Divine Purpose and will that He should die at the Passover—at that particular Passover—and that He should die by being betrayed and by being crucified. Without entering into the question of the responsibility and free will of men, I am sure that the Providence of their Lord and Master worked this all out. I wonder that they did not take up stones to stone Him, but they could not, for He *must be crucified*. I wonder that they did not hire an assassin, for there were plenty in those days who would have stabbed Him for a shilling. But no—He must be crucified! I marvel that they had not slain Him long ago, for they did take up stones again and again to stone Him—but His hour was not then come. There was a Providence working all the while and shaping His end as it shapes ours. He was immortal till His work was done. But when the two days of which He spoke were over, He must die. With cruel and wicked hands and of their own voluntary and evil will, they crucified and slew the Christ—yet it was all according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." I never yet pretended to explain how free agency and absolute predestination can both be true, but I am sure that they are both true, both written in Scripture, and both *facts*. To reconcile them is

no business of mine or yours, but to admire how they are reconciled in fact is a business of yours and mine and, therefore, let us do so now.

I want you, next, to admire your Lord by recognizing His *extraordinary correctness as a Prophet.* Let me read on beyond our text—"You know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified. Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, into the palace of the High Priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by trickery and kill Him. But they said, not on the feast day"—mark that—"not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people." Now note this—it *must be on the feast day and it shall be on the feast day.* Yet they said, "not on the feast day." But what does it matter what *they* say? Do you not observe how they were checkmated all round, how their purpose was like the whistling wind and the Eternal Purpose stood firm in every particular? They said, "We will take Him by trickery and kill Him." But they did not—they took Him by force. They said, "We will kill Him." But they did not, for He died by the hands of the Romans. They meant to slay Him privately, but they could not, for He must be hung up before high noon in the midst of the people!

And, above all, they said, "not on the feast day. Not on the feast day." I think I hear old Caiaphas there, with all his wisdom and all his cunning, saying, "not on the feast day," and Annas and all the priests join in the chorus, "not on the feast day. Postpone it a little till the millions have departed, the vulgar throng who, perhaps, would make a riot in His favor." There they stood with their broad-bordered garments and their phylacteries. And they were of the opinion that what Caiaphas had proposed, and Annas had seconded, should be carried unanimously—"not on the feast day." But Christ had said, "After two days is the feast day, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified." We do not know how it all came to be hurried on against their deliberate will, but Judas ran to them in hot haste and said, "What will you give me?" And they were so eager for Christ's death that they overleaped themselves! "We will give you thirty pieces of silver," they said, and they weighed it out to him, little thinking how quick he would be about his accursed business! Soon he comes back and says, "He is in the garden. You can easily take Him there while He is in prayer with a few of His disciples. I will conduct you there." And before long the deed of darkness is done. These crafty, cruel men had said, "not on the feast day," but it *was* on the feast day, as Jesus had foretold that it would be!

Now, Beloved, when our Lord tells us anything, let us always believe it. Whatever may appear to be against His statements, let us make nothing of it. A man in Jerusalem at that time might have said, "The Christ cannot be put to death unless these scribes and elders of the people agree to it! And you can see that they have resolved not to have it on the feast day. He will not be crucified on the Passover! The whole type will break down and it will be shown that He is not what He professed to be." Ah, but they may say, "not on the feast day," till they are hoarse—*He has said*, "After two days is the feast day, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified"—and so it came to pass!

Our Lord has said that He will come again, yet men ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Brothers and Sisters, you can be sure that He will come! He has always kept His Word and He will come as He said. Ah, but they say that He will not come to punish the ungodly who have defied Him—but He will! The Son of Man shall sit upon the Throne of His Glory and before Him shall be gathered all nations! He shall separate them, the one from the other, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats, and He will say to those on His left hand, "Depart, you cursed," as surely as He will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed." Every jot and tittle that has ever fallen from the lips of Christ is sure to come to pass, for you know that He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away." You may rest upon the eternal purpose of God and the faithful promise of Christ which shall never fail, for not one of Christ's Words shall fall to the ground unfulfilled!

Let us adore Him, then, as our true Prophet. "Very God of very God," "the faithful and true Witness," "the Prince of the kings of the earth," we do adore You this very hour!

IV. Now, fourthly, and lastly, dear Friends, I want you to IMITATE YOUR EXEMPLAR.

I will not detain you more than a minute or two upon this point, but I want you, as far as your Lord is imitable, to imitate Him in the spirit of this verse. I have told you that there was no boasting in Him, but that there was a deep calm and a firm resolve even in the immediate prospect of a cruel and shameful death. And I think that you should imitate your Lord in this respect. Suppose that, in two days, there shall come a "post" from the New Jerusalem to tell you that the silver cord is about to be loosed, the golden bowl to be broken and that your spirit must return to God who gave it? In such a case, it behooves you, dear follower of Christ, to receive that message with as much calmness as Christ delivered His own death warrant, though it had to be spoken in such language as this—"You know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

It will not run like that with you, but it may be that in two days consumption will end in hemorrhage, or that old age will bring down the frail tent of your mortality, or that disease which is now upon you will drag you to the grave. Well, if it is so in two days—ah, if it were so in two hours, or two minutes!—it is for the child of God to say, "Your will be done," just as the Master did. Happy was that woman who said, "Every morning, before I come downstairs, I dip my foot in the river of death, and I shall not be afraid to *plunge* into it for the last time." They who die daily, as we all should, are always ready to die! I like Bengel's notion concerning death. He says, "I do not think that a Christian should make any fuss about dying. When I am in company and somebody comes to the door and says, 'Mr. Bengel is needed,' I let the company go on with their talk and I just slip out and I am gone. Perhaps, after a little while, they say, 'Mr. Bengel is gone.' Yes, that is all—and that is how I would like to die—for God to knock at my door and for me to be gone without making any fuss about it."—

"Strangers into life we come,
And dying is but going Home."

I do not think that there ought to be any jerk on the metals when we arrive at the heavenly terminus. We just run straight on into the shed where the engine stops—no, into Glory where we shall rest forever and ever! I think I have heard of a captain who was so skilled that when he had arranged all the steering gear, he had not to alter a point for thousands of miles. And when he came to the harbor, he had so guided the vessel that he sailed straight in. If you get the Lord Jesus Christ on board the vessel of your life, you will find that He is such a skillful steersman that you will never have to alter your course! He will so set your ship's head that between here and Heaven, there will be nothing to do but to go right on. And then, all of a sudden, you will hear a voice saying, "Furl sail! Let go the anchor!" You will hear a little rattle of the chain and the vessel will be still forever in that port which is truly called the Fair Havens.

That is how it should be and I am going to finish by saying that I believe that is how it will be. If I say to you that it ought to be so, you will perhaps say to me, "Ah, Sir, but I am often subject to bondage through fear of death!" Yes, but you will not be when you come to die! O poor Little-Faith, you want to have strength *now* to die? But God knows that you are not going to die for some time, yet, so what would you do with dying Grace if He were to give it to you *now*? Where would you pack it up and store it? It will be quite time to get dying Grace when you come to die. Have I not seen some fidgety old folk who have been really a trouble to other people through their getting so worried and anxious? But all of a sudden there has come upon them such a beautiful quiet! It has been said, "Oh, grandma is so different! Something is going to happen, we feel sure."

One day she had not anything to trouble her. Everybody could see that she was seriously ill, but her dear old eyes sparkled with unusual brightness and there was an almost unearthly smile upon her face. And she said at night, "I don't feel quite as well as usual. I think tomorrow morning, I shall sleep a little later." And she did. So they went up to her. She said that she had had a blessed night—she did not know whether she had slept, but she had seen in the night such a wondrous sight, though she could not describe what it was like! They all gathered round the bed, for they perceived that something very mysterious had happened to her. And she blessed them all and said, "Good-bye. Meet me in Heaven." And she was gone. And they said to me afterwards, "Our dear old grandma used always to be afraid of dying, but it did not come to much when she really came to die, did it?" I have often seen it so! It is no strange story that I am telling you.

A Christian man has been so unwise as to be always fearing that he would play the fool when he came to die and yet, when it has come to the time of night, the dear child of God, who had long been in the dark, has received his candle! His Lord has given him his bedroom candle and he has gone upstairs—and by its light he has passed away into the land where they need no candle, neither light of the sun, but the Lord God gives them light! I believe that many of us will die just like that! I believe that you will, my dear Sister. I believe that you will, my dear Brother. As your days, your strength shall be, and as your last day is, so shall your

strength be. And I should not wonder if, one of these days, you or I will be heard saying, "Now, dear Friends, the doctor has told me that I cannot live long. I asked him how long, and he said, 'Perhaps, a week,' and I was a little disappointed that I had to wait so long."

I should not wonder if those around us should hear us say, "Well, it is only two days according to their reckoning, and perhaps it will not be two days. I think that I shall go next Sunday morning, just when the bells are ringing the people into the House of Prayer on earth. Just then I shall hear Heaven's bells ringing and I shall say, 'Good-bye,' and be where I have often longed to be, where my treasure is, where my Best-Beloved is!"

So may it be with you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 4:16-30; JOHN 8:37-59. (R.V.)

We will read, from the Revised Version, two passages which record attempts made to kill our Lord before His time had come. You will see, from the sermon, why we read them. [Sermon came *after* the exposition.—EOD.]

Luke 4:16-21. *And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and He entered, as His custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the Prophet Isaiah. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor: He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, Today has this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears.* Alas, not in their *hearts*! They had heard Christ read the prophecy that related to Himself, but they had not accepted its message.

22-27. *And all bore Him witness, and wondered at the Words of Grace which proceeded out of His mouth: and they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And He said unto them, Doubtless you will say unto Me this parable, Physician, heal Yourself: whatever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in Your own country. And He said, Verily I say unto you, No Prophet is acceptable in his own country. But of a truth I say unto you, There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the Heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the Prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.* Thus the Savior taught God's absolute right to deal out His mercies as He pleases. To that great doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, Christ's Hearers would not submit, even as many in the present day will not yield.

28. *And they were all filled with wrath in the synagogue.* They admired Christ's style of speech, but when He came to that man-humbling and God-glorifying doctrine, they were filled with wrath!

28-30. *As they heard these things; and they rose up, and cast Him forth out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might throw Him down headlong. But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way.*

John 8:37-59. *I know that you are Abraham's seed; yet you seek to kill Me, because My Word has not free course in you. I speak the things which* 1 *have seen with My Father: and you also do the things which you heard from your father. They answered and said unto Him, Our father is Abraham. Jesus said unto them, If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man that has told you the truth, which I heard from God: this did not Abraham. You do the works of your father. They said unto Him, We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, you would love Me: for I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Even because you cannot hear My Word. You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof. But because I say the truth, you believe Me not. Which of you convicts Me of sin? If I say truth, why do you not believe Me? He that is of God hears the Words of God: for this cause you hear them not, because you are not of God. The Jews answered and said unto Him, Say we not well that You are a Samaritan, and have a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. But I seek not My own glory: there is One that seeks and judges. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keeps My Word, he shall never see death. The Jews said unto Him, Now we know that You have a devil. Abraham is dead, and the Prophets; and You say, If a man keeps My Word, he shall never taste of death. Are You greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? And the Prophets are dead: whom make You Yourself? Jesus answered, If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing: it is My Father that glorifies Me of whom you say, that He is your God; and you have not known Him: but I know Him; and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be like unto you, a liar: but I know Him, and keep His Word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and He saw it, and was glad. The Jews therefore said unto Him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I Am. They took up stones therefore to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the Temple.*

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

ABRAHAM'S DOUBLE BLESSING
NO. 2523

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"I will bless you, and you shall be a blessing."
Genesis 12:2.

THIS was to be the double result of Abraham's coming out from his own country and his father's house. Those Orientals clung with great tenacity to their native homes. We, in these latter ages, are not so restful—we think nothing of crossing the Atlantic and many think little of going to the other side of the globe—but those Easterns trembled, even, to cross the Euphrates or the Tigris! They spoke of the land beyond those rivers as "across the flood," and a journey of two or three hundred miles seemed to them to be an event only second to death, itself. Yet when the Lord said to Abraham, "Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you," he, "departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him." His obedience was an act of heroic faith!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, in consequence of this obedience, Abraham obtained the double blessing of which our text speaks. He is called the Father of the Faithful, that is, the father of all such as believe in God, so that, if we truly believe in God, we shall do what Abraham as a Believer did. Children are like their father. Believers are like the father of all Believers, so that there will be a going out for them as there was for him. We may not be called to actually leave our homes and our native land, but we shall have a great deal more troublesome task than that, for we are to be separated from the people among whom we dwell—to dwell among them, yet not to be of them—in the world, but not of the world! This is not an easy thing. It is far easier to become a monk, or a nun, and shut yourself up alone, than it is to live in the midst of ungodly people and yet to be, yourself, godly—to trade with the usual followers of commerce and not to fall into their business customs—to mix with the usual host of thinkers, yet not to think as they think, but to endeavor to think the thoughts of God and to obey the will of the Most High.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was the most perfect Man among men. In no respect, in dress or in anything else, did He separate Himself from the rest of mankind by anything merely external. He ate and drank just as they did. He sat at their tables, slept in their houses and talked with them by the way—yet was He always "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." All Believers are called thus to live in the world a separated life, in obedience to the Divine command, "Come out from

among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." There is no necessity for us to wear either the broad-brimmed hat or the collarless coat, or anything whatever by which we shall be marked off from the rest of men. We are to be separated in *reality* rather than merely in *appearance*, to be separated by a higher tone of morals, to be separated by a truer life—a life with God, a life *in* God—to be separated by faith in the unseen, to be separated by an enthusiasm to which the rest of mankind will not pretend, which, indeed, they will even despise! This is the high, hard, holy, heavenly task to which Believers in Christ are called. Oh, for Grace to accomplish it!

In proportion as we accomplish it, the words of my text will come true to us—"I will bless you, and you shall be a blessing." As far as Abraham did *not* live the life of separation, so far he missed the blessing. You remember that he went down into Egypt and you know what trouble he got into there—and he brought more trouble away with him. As I said, this morning, (see exposition at end of sermon), very likely Hagar was one of the slaves given to him by Pharaoh when he dismissed him and Sarah—and you know what trouble Hagar brought into the family. (Sermon #1869, Volume 31—*Hagar at the Fountain—read/download the entire sermon for free at http://www.spurgeongems.org*). If Abraham had lived the separated life and had not fallen into the customs of those round about him, he would not have had that sin and sorrow concerning Hagar. Nor would he have had that righteous rebuke from Abimelech, the king of Gerar, when again he had acted deceitfully with regard to his wife.

Whenever you see Abraham living alone before the Lord, you see a man of God, blessed of God, even as the Lord said, "I called him alone, and blessed him." But when he goes and links himself with others, he loses the fullness of the blessing and gets into serious trouble. And you, Christian men and women, will find that as long as you keep close to your Lord and Master, you will enjoy His blessing. You may have cares and trials, but they shall be blessed cares and blessed trials! But if you go into the world and act as men of the world act—if you sow your wild oats, you will have to reap them! Depend upon it, the child of God will feel the weight of his Father's rod if he begins to play with the boys of the street. If he is not careful of his company, keeping with his Father's children—and careful of his life and conversation, doing and saying what his Father would have him do and say—he will find the rod fall heavily upon his shoulders, even as the Lord said of old to the children of Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

The blessings of which I am about to speak belong to those who live the separated life, to those who keep in the narrow way. Just in proportion as the Grace of God helps us into that separated life and keeps us there, we shall be blessed and shall be made a blessing.

I. First, let us consider THE FIRST BLESSING promised to Abraham in our text—"I will bless you." Notice that the personal blessing comes first. You cannot be a blessing to others unless God has first blessed you. We do not encourage selfishness in anything, but we do say that you must fill your own pitcher before another man can drink out of it.

You must have bread in your own hands before you can break it for the multitudes. It is no use for you to attempt to sow out of an empty basket, for that would be sowing nothing but wind. First of all, then, you must get the blessing yourself, for until it can be said to you, "I will bless you," it cannot be said, "You shall be a blessing."

What was the blessing which God gave Abraham? It was the blessing which He will give to all who live as Abraham lived and believe as Abraham believed! And, first, Abraham had *the rest of faith.* He had no home except his tent—always an uncomfortable style of dwelling—and no plot of land to call his own. He was a mere gypsy, moving about from place to place. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." Yet, surely, there never was a man more restful than this same Abraham! Wherever you meet him, he stands out before you as a calm, quiet, noble figure. Jacob is always cunning, bargaining, plotting and scheming. But Abraham has nothing of that sort of character—he is a plain, simple man—believing in God and going about his business with that leisure which comes of perfect trustfulness. If God says to him, "Leave your country," he leaves it. Go and ask him, "Where are you going, Abraham?" He does not know. God has told him to go out and he is going. The Canaanite is still in the land of promise—is he not afraid to go there? May not the inhabitants cut him off, directly, if he comes near them?

Abraham is not afraid! God has told him to go to the land of Canaan and he feels that he has a right to be there. God causes a superstitious dread to fall upon those Canaanites—a voice seems to whisper in their heart, "Touch not My anointed"—and so Abraham dwells securely among them. An invading host comes from a distance and carries away his poor nephew, Lot, who has gone to live down Sodom way, that he may be more comfortable in a city. Abraham does not deliberate about his course of action—it is his business to set Lot free—so, with the few young men who are around him, the old man pursues the five kings, drives them before him like stubble driven before the wind, and brings back his nephew Lot and all the spoil! He never sets his hand to anything but he succeeds in it, and he never seems to worry himself about anything! God's will is the one rule that he is always content to obey and he feels perfectly satisfied wherever he may be. Kings fall down before him, for he is a more truly royal personage than those who are draped in purple, and who wear crowns! They say that he is one of nature's true princes and so he is. God had made him a prince by one touch of faith, for it was faith that did it all—he believed in God and that believing made him truly great!

Do not say, dear Friends, that this faith was only possible to Abraham. Brothers, Sisters, it is possible to us, also, if we will have it. May God help us to believe the promise and not to be staggered at it through unbelief! If we will but trust God through thick and thin, through dark and light—if we will but believe God more than we believe our eyes or our ears—if we will but believe steadily, even though our own body seems as dead, that God will keep His promise to the very letter. And if we will,

through that faith, always do the right, and never be daunted or turned aside, then shall our peace be like a river and our righteousness as the waves of the sea—and there shall be a kingly majesty about our character, simple and unadorned as it may be, and open as it may seem to be to the jests and sarcasms of an unbelieving age!

Whatever men may say, they will really respect and reverence the man who believes in God and lives as a man of faith should live. If you want perfect rest in this life—and it is worth more than thousands of precious jewels—if you would wear in your buttonhole the herb called heartsease—if you would go through the world content, quiet, happy and free from care and fear, "trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." Has not God said, "I will bless you"? He will bless you by means of your own faith, making you a peaceful, happy person while all the world besides seems to be up in arms, worried and anxious!

Beside the rest of faith, Abraham had the *victory of faith.* "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." Abraham was not a fighting man, but when he was called to fight, he fought in real earnest, and his adversaries fell or fled before him. The victory of Abraham's faith, when he vanquished Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, was not only a victory on the battlefield, but a victory afterwards! Those kings had taken the spoils of the kings of the cities of the plain and had carried away all the booty, but Abraham recovered it all, so that he might have claimed it as his own—and even the king of Sodom said to him, "Give me the persons, and take the goods to yourself." It was a fine pile, no doubt, and ordinary men do not look at such treasures without some kind of longing for them, but Abraham answered, "I have lifted up my hands unto the Lord, the Most High God, the possessor of Heaven and earth, that I will not take from you a thread even to a shoelace, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram *rich.'*" "No," says the Patriarch, "what I receive shall come from God, and not from the king of Sodom."

It was a real victory of faith for him to be able to act like that. It is a great thing for a Christian to conquer sin, but I reckon that it is a greater thing for him not to yield to that which looks dubious, or that which is selfish although it may be just. It is a victory for faith when the man says, "No, no! I might do this, or that, or the other, but I am a child of God and, therefore, I shall not do it. I trust in God and I will not do it, lest at any time in my future life someone should say, 'That was not acting as a Christian should act.' No, I will not take from a thread even to a shoelace that belongs to the king of Sodom, lest thereby my God should be displeased or dishonored." What a glorious victory Abraham had that day in the king's dale!

A Christian, if he lives to God by faith, will often have just such a victory as that. If he has not as much of this world's goods as others have, he will not fret and pine after them. He will say, "I am happy enough without them." And if God should be pleased to give him riches, he will live above them and he will never let them get into his heart. "No," he will

say, "I am not enriched by these things. My treasure is of a higher and nobler kind." There are many men who could not be trusted to be rich, for if they were to attain to wealth, they would become proud and make an idol of their gold. But the true heir of Heaven has received this blessing from God—that he knows, with Paul, both how to be abased and how to abound, how to be full and to be hungry. He has learned, in whatever state he is, to be content. And the man who has learned that lesson is a blessed man!

Another blessing which Abraham had, and which all Believers may have, is this—*he had power with* God. Oh, that every one of us possessed such power and constantly used it! God was about to destroy the cities of the plain on account of their horrible lusts and He said to Himself, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Was not he a blessed man concerning whom God asked that question? God goes to Abraham and tells him what He is about to do. And Abraham, at once, with the power that he had with God, begins to plead with Him in that famous dialogue between the man of God and the God of the man! You know how he pleaded—"Will You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Perhaps there are fifty righteous within the city: will You also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are there?" The next plea was, "Will you destroy all the city for lack of forty-five?" Then he brought the number down to forty, to thirty, to 20 and, at last, to 10 righteous. Was it not a glorious thing for this man, this sheik, this Bedouin of the desert, to plead and wrestle thus with the eternal God?

Talk not to me about the grandeur of kings upon their thrones—Abraham speaking thus with God is greater than all of them put together! Tell me not of brave warriors returning from the fight amid the acclamations of the throng! This lonely man, grasping the arm of Jehovah and urging his suit for mercy for the people of these doomed cities, is a greater man than all mortals besides! They used to say of Luther, as he walked along the street, "There goes the man who can have of God anything he likes to ask." And there are some I know to whom God has given this same privilege! And if we will but walk alone with God and will fully trust Him, He will give us *carte blanche*—He *has* given it to us in those wondrous words of Christ, "If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." "Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart." It is as if the silver keys of Paradise swung at the belts of the saints! Have they not had the keys of the rain? Did not Elijah turn the key and shut up the clouds for three years and six months—and then turn it the other way and bring a blessed deluge on the land? Oh, if we have but faith, we shall have this high privilege of coming to the Mercy Seat, just when we will, and asking of our God according to our need—and His promise shall be fulfilled to each one of us, "I will bless you."

I must add, yet further, that Abraham had from God the great blessedness of *being sustained under trial*. Have you ever noticed a certain little record concerning Abraham? It is after he had offered up his son, Isaac. That was the sharpest trial that could have befallen mortal man—

to be commanded to go and offer up his own son, his only son, his beloved son—the son who had been miraculously given to him! But he, with stalwart faith, felt sure that God would keep His promise and that He would raise Isaac from the dead, if necessary, so it was not for him to reason about the matter, but to do what seemed to be the terrible will of God. Some little while after that great trial, it is written, "Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." That is the short history of his long life—God told him that He would bless him—and He did. "The Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." What? When He commanded him to slay his son? Yes. He "had blessed him in all things." What? When He took away his wife Sarah? Yes, for, "the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things."

Perhaps, if his life had been without troubles, that sentence would not have been true! Just look at this matter a moment, dear Friends. When you and I, with all our cares, trials, poverty, suffering and pain shall get to our journey's end, if we have faith like Abraham's, it will be written of each one of us, "The Lord had blessed him in all things—blessed him in his troubles, blessed him in those cruel tests of faith as they seemed to be—blessed him by sustaining him under them all." I think that if I were an old sailor, I would not like to have had a life on a sea of glass. If I were at home, say at 70 years of age, and my grandchildren had gathered around me to hear the story of my life, I would not like to have to sum it all up by saying, "Boys, I do not know anything about storms. I never was in one in my life. You see, I never went to sea without a favorable wind. Whenever I got on board ship, all storms ceased and I had nothing to do but just to watch until I reached the port." I expect the boys would ask, "But, Grandfather, were there never any big waves?" "No, never." "Were you never cast away on a rock?" "No, never—it was all smooth with me from beginning to end."

There would be nothing to tell about a life like that and a man would not make much of a sailor that way. Or suppose it is one of our soldiers who, when he has retired from the army says, "I never smelt gunpowder." I pray God that our soldiers may never have to fight, but still, a man will never make anything of a soldier if that is the fact with him. And you and I will not make stalwart Christians without trials and troubles! And when we get to Heaven, we shall not have so much for which to glorify God if we have had our bread and butter spread for us from the first day to the last, and have never had any lack of food, never any hard labor, never any stern affliction, never any bitter pain, never any deep distress! But how blessed are they who have done business in great waters, who have seen the white teeth of the storm furies and sailed through the very throat of death and come out safely! How blessed are they who have had much reason for fear, but who have had no fear, God having lifted them above it by the supernatural energy of His Grace! So, Brothers and Sisters, you may often have blessing come to you, not in the shape of a rolled path all the way to Heaven, but in the shape of a *faith* that endures to the end, so that you shall stand firm in every temptation and, at the

last, shall enter into your rest and say at the end of all, "God has blessed me in all things, blessed be His holy name!"

Another special favor that Abraham had was *God's Presence.* I think that the greatest blessing God ever gives to a man is His own Presence. If I had my choice of all the blessings of this life, I certainly should not ask for wealth, for that can bring no ease. And I certainly should not ask for popularity, for there is no rest to the man upon whose words men constantly wait—and it is a hard task one has to perform in such a case as that. But I should choose, as my highest honor, to have God always with me. Who would choose between the burning fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar and a bed of down if God was equally with us in both cases? It matters not! We might be just as happy in the one case as in the other. If God is with us—if His Divine love surrounds us—we carry our own atmosphere wherever we go, we take our own abode with us wherever we journey! And with Moses we can say, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." That heart is full of Heaven that is full of God. That man is blessed to all the intents of bliss who dwells in God and in whom God dwells! And that is the privilege of all who truly believe in Jesus, all who come out from the world and live a life of faith as Abraham did.

Bow your head, Believer, and let the Lord God pronounce on you this benediction, "Surely, blessing I will bless you." Sorrowing, suffering, weary, burdened, yet receive this blessing as from God's own mouth, "I will bless you." Poor, despised, slandered, yet is the blessing not one whit curtailed! So, take it home with you and go on your way rejoicing!

II. Now let us turn to the second part of the text and consider THE SECOND BLESSING promised to Abraham. "You shall be a blessing." When God has blessed any man, He makes that man to be a blessing to others. The Lord fills him that he may overflow with blessing for those around him. The Holy Spirit puts into the man the life of God that that life may flow out of him to others.

How, then, do we bless other men? I answer—genuine Christians bless other men by their *example.* I will give you one instance—sometimes an instance is better than an explanation. I suppose that there is hardly a person here who has not heard of that famous preacher of the Gospel, Mr. John Angell James. I remember, 33 years ago, taking a journey from Cambridge to Birmingham, that I might be able to say that I had heard Mr. John Angell James preach. And I did hear him preach, greatly to my comfort and joy. You know that he wrote that book, *The Anxious Enquirer,* which has been the means of bringing so many to Christ, but did you ever hear how John Angell James came to be a Christian and a preacher? He was engaged as a clerk in an office, as many of you may be, and he slept upon his master's premises. He had been accustomed, when he retired for the night, to get into bed without any prayer or any reading of the Scriptures, but there came into the same office a new clerk, a young man. James went upstairs, undressed himself as quickly as he could, and got into bed, when, to his surprise, the new clerk moved the

candle, went to his box, took out his Bible, drew his chair up, sat down as if he was quite at home, and read a chapter!

Then, with equal deliberation, he knelt down at his bedside and prayed. He never said a word to John Angell James about not praying, But he did what was a great deal better—he, *himself,* prayed. Within a few months from that time, Mr. James was a converted man! Within two or three years, he was a minister of the Gospel, and I cannot help tracing the usefulness of the preacher to the decision of that young unknown clerk who dared to do the right thing come what might! "I will bless you," said God to that young clerk, "and I will make you a blessing." I wonder whether, afterwards, he used to say to himself, "I thank God that I knelt down and prayed that night, because, by that simple act of mine, that man of God was brought to the feet of Jesus and tens of thousands were converted by his instrumentality"?

"I will make you a blessing." Oh, that our example might be such that, wherever we go, we may be a blessing! Some of you, perhaps, have lived in very poor neighborhoods—you have got into poverty and have to dwell in a back slum. As soon as you are converted, you want to move away and I do not blame you—who would like to remain there? At the same time, it seems a pity that the moment there is a lamp lit, we should take it out of the dark corner. That slum is where your example is needed, my Brother! Where do you put the salt? Why, of course, where there is something that, without it, will rot! So there must be children of God who will say, "We mean to live here and drive the devil out. We do not intend to leave this corner, but we mean to stay here and fight the foe till God shall give us the victory."

Further, dear Friends, those whom God uses are made a blessing *by their prayers.* Does anybody know the full extent of the blessings which come upon us in answer to the prayers of others? Unhappy is the man who has not somebody praying for him! But rich is that one who is daily the object of the prayers of saints. O dear Friends, if God has saved you, never stint your prayers for others! I ask a share in them—I count myself rich in having the prayers of so many—how often am I gladdened and comforted when I know that there are thousands of Christian people who have pledged themselves never to pray either morning or evening without remembering me in their prayers! I thank them from the bottom of my heart—they can do me no greater kindness! Pray for all ministers of Christ, pray for all Christians and pray day and night for this great wicked city of ours, steeped up to its throat in sin! God have mercy upon it! Get to your chamber, child of God, and bow your knees and cry mightily unto the Most High, for these evil days sorely need it. If ever we needed intercessors, it is now! If John Knox's prayers saved Scotland—and they did—we need a man like he to save England and to bless our country at this present moment. You can be made a blessing by your intense and vehement prayers! Therefore, all of you who are Believers "pray without ceasing."

Moreover, if God has blessed us, we ought to try to be made a blessing *by our ordinary life.* Sydney Smith, the witty clergyman, often said some

very good things and one I remember was, "Always make it a rule to make somebody happy every day, even if it is only by giving a child a farthing, or helping a poor woman to carry a parcel that is too heavy for her." There really is so much misery m the world that it is a pity for us to cause a child to cry, or even to cause a dog to go howling down the street! I think that we ought to make everyone happy wherever we are, for our Master went about doing good to all sorts and conditions of men. But certainly in our own family we who love the Lord should have the brightest eyes and the most cheering countenances. I know some professed Christians who are so dreadfully good, so painfully pious, that I cannot live near them. "You shall not, you shall not," seems written across their very foreheads! All that we must *not* do, they perfectly understand, but wherein there is anything of joy and delight and pleasure in this holy faith of ours, which came from our blessed joyous Savior—for such He was, though He was the Man of Sorrows—all that they seem to forget!

Let it not be so among us, dear Friends, but let us try with all our might to be a blessing to everybody and, most of all, to be a blessing to those for whom nobody cares. Let us go out of our way to remember the forgotten, to help the helpless, to succor those who are in the deepest need. You know how it is in this world, everybody will give something to the person who does not need it—but why not give to the poor, the needy and the helpless? That is where our gifts should go most freely. These cannot make us a return, but we shall have a reward at the last if we do them good. Oh, for the faith which is truly a blessing because we endeavor to make other people happy wherever we may be!

"I will make you a blessing." When this promise came to Abraham, surely the very essence of it was that Abraham was *to be made a blessing to the world by virtue of his connection with Jesus Christ.* Our Lord was descended from Abraham—"He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." Our Savior was a Jew. He took upon Himself the nature of that race and therein Abraham became a blessing to the whole world! And now, spiritually, we who believe are the children of Abraham. We come not into the Covenant as they do who are merely descended from Abraham after the flesh, but we come in with Isaac, the child of the promise, born not after the flesh, but after the power of the Spirit! And so we become heirs of salvation by virtue of that faith which was in Abraham and which dwells also in us by the gift of the Holy Spirit!

Beloved, if you and I are to be made a blessing to others, it must be by our bringing the Lord Jesus Christ to those whom we meet from day to day. Do not talk to a friend without speaking of your Savior. Do not be long in a house without introducing that dear name—there is so much of savor, of sweetness, of comfort, of healing, of life in that precious name of Jesus, that you cannot too often speak of it, or too frequently introduce it into all sorts of companies! I heard, some time ago, of a man handcuffed and being taken away by the police for a term of imprisonment—a horrible wretch with a face that was scarcely human, a man who seemed as if

he was cut out for a murderer—and as he stood in the station and few cared even to look at him, a little girl went near and, looking up to him, said, "Poor man, I pity you." He was wretch enough to utter some lewd and profane expression and the child, astonished, ran back to her father. But she could not stay long. There seemed to be a charm to her about that wicked man, so she ran into the room, again, and said, "Poor man, Jesus Christ pities you—He does!" The police said to the governor of the jail, when handing over their prisoner, "That man will give you a world of trouble. He is the most horrible brute we ever came across, it took a great many of us to capture him."

The next morning he was found quiet and subdued—and during all the term of his imprisonment there was not a better prisoner! And he went out of the jail a changed man. He told the chaplain that it was the little girl who had done it when she said that she pitied him and that Jesus Christ pitied him. If we would more often bring in that blessed name of Jesus, then would our text be fulfilled, "I will bless you, and you shall be a blessing." Oh, that we would all first come to Him and find the blessing that is treasured up in Him—and then go forth and be a blessing to our own family and to all around us! O Lord, grant that it may be so, for Your dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 12:1-7; 14:17-24; 22:15-18.

We will read two or three passages in the Book of Genesis concerning God blessing His servant Abraham. Turn first to the 12th chapter.

Chapter 12, verse 1. *Now the lord had said unto Abram, Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you.* It was God's intention to keep His Truth and His pure worship alive in the world by committing it to the charge of one man and the nation that should spring from him. In the Infinite Sovereignty of His Grace, He chose Abraham—passing by all the rest of mankind—and elected him to be the depository of the heavenly Light of God, that through him it might be preserved in the world until the days when it should be more widely scattered. It seemed essential to this end that Abraham should come right out from his fellow countrymen and be separate unto Jehovah, so the Lord said to him, "Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you."

2, 3. *And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you: and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed.* There, you see, was the missionary character of the seed of Abraham, if they had but recognized it! God did not bless them for themselves, alone, but for all nations—"In you shall *all* families *of the earth* be blessed."

4. *So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed*

out of Haran. He had already attained a fine old age, but he had another century of life before him, which he could not, then, foresee, or expect. If, at his age, he had said, "Lord, I am too old to travel, too old to leave my country and to begin to live a wandering life," we could not have wondered. But he did not talk in that fashion. He was commanded to go and we read, "So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him."

5, 6. *And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.* Fierce and powerful nations possessed the country! It did not seem a very likely place to be the heritage of a peace-loving man like Abraham. God does not always fulfill His promises to His people at once, otherwise, where would be the room for faith? This life of ours is to be a life of faith and it will be well rewarded in the end. Abraham had not a foot of land to call his own, except that cave of Machpelah which he bought from the sons of Heth for a burying place for his beloved Sarah.

7. *And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto your seed will I give this land and there built he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.* Thus, you see, Abraham began his separated life with a blessing from the Lord his God. Further on in his history he received a still larger blessing when he returned from his victory over the kings.

Genesis 14:17-19. *And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's valley. And Melchizedek, King of Salem, brought forth bread and wine: and He was the Priest of the most high God. And He blessed him.* In the name of God, Melchizedek blessed Abraham. This mysterious Personage, the highest type of our Lord Jesus Christ, blessed Abraham, "and without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." "He blessed him."

19, 20. *And said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of Heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which has delivered your enemies into your hands. And he gave Him tithes of all.* Abraham recognized the Priest of God as his spiritual superior "and he gave Him tithes of all."

21. *And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, give me the persons, and take the goods to yourself.* It was according to the rule of war that if persons who had made an invasion were afterwards, themselves, captured, then if the new captor gave up the persons, he was fully entitled to take the goods to himself.

22, 23. *And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up my hand unto the LORD, the Most High God, the possessor of Heaven and earth, that I will not take from you a thread even to a shoelace, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich.* The Patriarch is greater than the king. He has a right to all his spoil, but he will not touch it, lest the glory of his God should thereby be stained. Abraham will have nothing but what his God shall give him! He will not

take anything from the king of Sodom. I like to see this glorious independence in the Believer. "I have a right to this," he says, "but I will not take it. What are mere earthly rights to me? My chief business is to honor the God of whom I am, and whom I serve. And if the taking of this spoil would dishonor Him, I will not take even so much as a thread or a shoelace."

24. *Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.* "Though I am willing to give up my share of the spoil, that is no reason why these men should do the same." Christian men ought not to expect worldlings to do what they cheerfully and willingly do, themselves and, indeed, it is not much use to expect it, for they are not likely to do it!

Now let us read in the 22nd Chapter of this same Book of Genesis. Abraham had endured the supreme test of his faith and had, in full intent, offered up his son Isaac at the command of God, his hand being withheld from the actual sacrifice only by an angelic voice.

Genesis 22:15-17. *And the Angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of Heaven the second time, and said, By Myself have I sworn, says the Lord, for because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son: that in blessing I will bless you.* "Whenever I am engaged in blessing, I will bless you. I will not pronounce a benediction in the which you shall not share—'In blessing I will bless you.'"

17, 18. *And in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the Heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed My voice.* See the result of one man's grand act of obedience and note how God can make that man to be the channel of blessing to all coming ages! Oh, that you and I might possess the Abrahamic faith which thus practically obeys the Lord and brings a blessing to all the nations of the earth!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" —
103 (VERSION 2), 89 (PART 2), 729.

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

FEARING AND HOPING
NO. 2524

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"The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him,
in those that hope in His mercy."
Psalm 147:11.

This Psalm, I think, was intended to set forth the singularity of God. In it we are exhorted to praise Him who is our God and to give honor and glory to Him alone. The Psalmist does not dwell, here, upon those attributes which usually call forth our praise, or the praises of men in general, but he touches some special strings of the harp from which he brings forth joyous music for the children of Zion, that they may be glad in their King. This is one of the notes of the Psalm—that although God, Himself is so high, He has a very tender regard toward those who are lowly. He turns His thoughts, not to those who are brilliant and attractive, but to those who are broken in heart and wounded in spirit! While the gods of the heathen are pictured in their mythologies as dealing with kingdoms and with wars and with other matters upon a large scale, this gracious God of ours is so infinitely condescending that He waters the grass, feeds the cattle and listens to the cries of young ravens! This is, indeed, a specialty with God and one which unconverted men do not readily discover, or even think much about when it is spoken of in their hearing. But you who know Him, you who love Him, delight in these wondrous condescension of His Grace—His dealing in mercy with the contrite and broken in spirit, His filling Heaven and yet filling you, His ruling the stars and yet managing your mean affairs—His fiat that creates a universe and His gentle promises suited to the understanding of a child, to the healing of a widow's sorrow, and the loosing of the bonds of the prisoner! Oh, yes, we feel that we are bound to our God with cords of a man and with bands of love! He considers us when we are of low estate, therefore we will give all diligence to acquaint ourselves with Him that we may be at peace.

Having spoken of the singularity of God, the Psalmist dwells, in the verse before us, upon the specialty of His favor. Great kings are known to have their favorite objects in which they delight with peculiar pleasure. Many monarchs have gloried in "the strength of a horse." Their squadrons of cavalry have been their confidence. Others have taken more delight in "the legs of a man." The muscles and sinews of their soldiers have been their boast. You must have noticed, in the Assyrian sculptures, the importance that was attached by the workmen and by the monarch, also, to "the legs of a man." They represent the warriors as brawny and strong, swift in running and firm in holding their place in the day of battle. But our God takes no delight in cavalry or infantry! No

armies of horse or foot soldiers give Him any gladness—the Lord takes pleasure in very different persons from these. His delight, His joy, His solace—if we may use such a word—are found in other company than that which is martial. He turns His eyes quite another way. "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy."

I. First of all, dear Friends, let us think of THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE FAVOR AS HERE DISTINGUISHED.

They are distinguished, first, from *physical strength.* I have already told you what is meant by the Psalmist in the previous verse, "He delights not in the strength of the horse: He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man." When a man was to be chosen to be king over Israel, the Lord, who knew the weakness of the people, gave to them one who was head and shoulders above the rest of them. It is natural to men to have regard to the comeliness of the person and the stature and apparent strength of the individual who is to rule over them. And, oftentimes, men and women are so foolish as to imagine that there is something about the beauty of their face, or the excellence of their person that should not only make their fellow creatures admire them, but should make their God admire them, too! True, there are old proverbs which bid us think lightly of the kind of beauty which is but skin deep and that tell us that "handsome is that handsome does." But still, there is the temptation in a man who finds himself healthy, vigorous and strong—the personification of power—to fancy that, as he has a measure of influence over his fellows, he may have favor with God.

But, ah, that would be indeed a vain and idle dream! Let no man thus delude himself. You, good Sir, with all your beauty and your strength, may be but a day's march from the grave! Then will you be *food for worms*, like the rest of those who have gone before you! "Beauty is vain." What is man, "whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" God thinks nothing of you in that matter of your personal strength and beauty, however greatly you may pride yourself thereon! Physical force is found in a greater degree in a horse than in a man—and if there were to be some honor given to man because of his physical strength, it ought to be given still more to the rhinoceros, or to the elephant, or to the whale! Therefore, dear Friends, you can clearly see how absurd it would be for a man to value himself upon his bodily comeliness or strength.

There are not many, I should think, who would fall into that gross absurdity, but there are some who seem to think that *mental vigor* will surely be respected of God. The man who is the deepest thinker, who can look into the very heart of a subject, who can see farthest into a millstone—surely *he* shall have some commendation from God! And there is a kind of superstition current that if a man has been very clever, if he has written some very entertaining books, it must be all right with him! Straightway, he who in his life sneered at saintship is enrolled among the saints! And for anyone to question the character of such a person, even though it may be well known that it was utterly deficient in every kind of virtue before God, is almost regarded as *treason against the majesty of literature*. Well, such a delusion may rule the shallow minds that yield to it, but rest you assured that cleverness, ability, culture and learning, in

and of themselves, have no influence with the Most High! He delights in the lowliest of men, when they turn to Him, when they sit at Jesus' feet and learn His Words. But the greatest conceivable ability, if it is united with forgetfulness of God, will ensure to its possessor a more terrible punishment from the right hand of God than would have fallen upon the man had he been ignorant and without gifts, "for unto whomever much is given, of him shall be much required."

It is a good thing to be learned and wise, and the more you can cultivate your minds, the better, but remember the words of the Apostle—"Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." And, oftentimes, the wisdom which is merely that of the mind may even prove like scales upon the spiritual eyes, hiding from the soul the blessed sight which alone can save it! It is true mentally as well as physically, that the Lord takes no pleasure in any of the faculties which a man possesses if he is destitute of Grace.

Another thing in which the Lord takes no pleasure is that *self-reliance* which is much cried up nowadays. This is only another form of "the strength of the horse" and "the legs of a man." Some persons proudly say that they are self-made men—and I generally find that they worship their makers. Having made themselves, they are peculiarly devoted to themselves. But a man who is self-made is badly made! If God does not make him anew, it would have been better for him never to have been made! That which comes of man is but a polluted stream from an impure source—out of evil comes evil, and from a depraved nature comes depravity. It is only when God makes us new creatures in Christ Jesus that it is any joy for us to be creatures at all! And all the praise must be given to Him. "It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves," if this day, "we are His people and the sheep of His pasture." Therefore, although you should exercise every faculty that you possess and push with might and main in the battle of life, do not rely on yourself.

It is foolish to worship a god of wood, or of stone. It is equally foolish to worship a god of flesh. And it is *most* foolish when that god of flesh is yourself! Worship the Lord, trust in God—"Trust in Him at all times; you people, pour out your heart before Him." "Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat comes, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." The Lord takes not pleasure in the boastful self-dependence wherein some glory.

Nor, dear Friends, do I think that God takes pleasure in any mere *capacity for service* which exists in any of us, whoever we may be. "The strength of the horse" and, "the legs of a man" do but set forth what I now intend to speak of. Suppose a man is a child of God and a preacher of the Word—and that he possesses peculiar gifts to set forth the Truth of God—let him not, therefore, exalt himself, for in mere capacity, even though it is the capacity to preach the Gospel, God takes no pleasure! A

preacher has a talent which brings with it great responsibility—it will not be a blessing bringing a reward unless Grace is given to him to use it to his Lord's Glory!

Are you, dear Friend, peculiarly adapted for teaching in the Sunday school, and has God put honor upon you there? Then remember that what your Master will look to will not be your ability, but your *fidelity*—not your capacious mind, your firm grasp of the Truth of God, and your power to impart it to others—but the Grace with which you use this faculty and this ability. I believe that there may be many a godly woman who teaches her handful of infants to do little more than read, and who is scarcely able to convey a profound idea to their minds, who, nevertheless, may be a greater blessing than that teacher who has gathered many about him, whom he has been able to instruct with marked ability, but without corresponding Grace. I am sure that it would have been better for some of us who have to come before thousands of hearers with our message and yet we are not be faithful to your souls—if we had occupied the lowliest pulpit and preached to only 10 or 20 people, or if we had never spoken at all! For God values none of us by our position, or our ability, or even by our apparent success! He does not take pleasure in all this of itself—it is in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy—in our spiritual relationship to Himself and our spiritual dealings with Himself, that He does have a keen delight. All the rest may or may not be delightful to Him. He may or may not look upon it with complacency—that will entirely depend upon whether we are those who fear Him and who hope in His mercy!

II. Now, in the second place, I want your earnest attention while I notice THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE FAVOR AS THEY ARE HERE DESCRIBED. "Them that fear Him: those that hope in His mercy."

You see, dear Friends, these are *things which relate to* God. God's favor is displayed to those who fear Him and who hope in His mercy. You are truly, dear Friend, what you are towards God, and God regards you according to what you are in reference to Himself. If you are a philanthropist, a lover of mankind—that is well as far as it goes, but it is always evil to put the second table of the Commandments before the first. The first is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind." And then the second table bids you, "love your neighbor as yourself." But he who does not love his God has not learned aright how to love his neighbor! There is a worm at the core of philanthropy when it is not accompanied with true religion. Depend upon it, that what you are toward your God, that you *really are*, and so does He regard you. What if you fear *evil*? Yet if you fear not *Him*, you are not really His! And what if you have hope this way or that? Yet you are not right before Him unless you have hope in His mercy! You have not come to your right condition unless your emotions, joyous or sorrowful, have relation to Him.

Notice, next, that this description of character applies to *true servants of God in their earliest and weakest form.* Observe, it is not said, here, that God has pleasure in those who possess full assurance, though that is most true, but He has pleasure in "them that fear Him"—who can get no further in the spiritual life than to fear the Lord, and who, as yet, even

have something of the spirit of bondage connected with that fear! Yet, if there is also in them a little of that brightness which comes of hoping in His mercy, the Lord takes pleasure even in such poor feeble creatures! They have not yet attained to full confidence in God's mercy—they are only hoping in it at present—yet, if it is a real fear of Him and a true hope in His mercy, however little it may be, the Lord takes pleasure in them! You do not take much pleasure in yourself, poor hoping-fearing one, do you? That may be and it may be quite consistent with God's taking pleasure in you! There are some who take pleasure in themselves, but in whom God has no pleasure—and there are many who loathe themselves in their own sight, who, nevertheless, are delightful in the sight of the Most High! Our judgment of ourselves is a very different thing from God's judgment of us.

Dear Heart, do you fear to come before God because of your sin? Do you tremblingly stretch out your finger to touch the hem of your Savior's garment, that you may be made whole? Is your faith feeble? Do you trust His Word, but weakly? He will not, therefore, spurn you, but will receive you, for, as He healed the woman who came behind Him in the crowd and bade her go in peace, so will He do with you. "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy." If they never get beyond that point for the present, they shall get into a higher stage, by-and-by, but even now the Lord takes pleasure in them! "Therefore comfort one another with these words." The description in our text is intended to embrace the *weakest forms of spiritual life*. I am sure it is, because of the kind of grammatical structure between our text and the verse that precedes it—"He delights not in the strength of the horse: He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man." That is, He has no pleasure in the strong things, the powerful, the vigorous, but He has pleasure in the weak, though true—in the trembling, though sincere. He takes pleasure in those who are so little that all we can say of them is that they fear Him and that they hope in His mercy!

Yet I also think that this description comprises *the noblest form of religion in the very highest degree of it.* After all, we do not get beyond this point—fearing God and hoping in His mercy! A little child grows, but when it has grown to manhood, it is the same being as when it was a child. It has not grown another eye, or another hand, or another foot—all that is in it when it is a man, was in it when it was a child! In like manner, all the Divine Graces of our holy religion are in the new-born babe in Grace—not perceptibly as yet, nor called into action, but they are all there—and when the babe in Grace shall reach the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus, there will be in him just what there was in him when he was a little and weak child. Therefore, let us grow as we may, we shall always fear God. Perfect love casts out the fear that has torment, but not that *filial fear* which is here meant, that child-like reverence and holy awe of the Most High that shall grow and shall deepen, world without end.

And as to hope, Beloved, why, we had hope when we began our spiritual life, and we still have hope—and that hope will continue with us—I will not say in Heaven, though I think it will, for there is something to hope for in the disembodied state. We shall hope for the Day of Resurrec-

tion and there will be something to hope for even in the resurrection, for, throughout the ages we shall have a good hope that still we shall be "forever with the Lord." Certainly, he who knows God best, fears Him most and also hopes in Him most! Fear deepens and hope rises and I believe that very much in proportion as a man has the fear of God before his eyes, he will have a hope in God within his heart. And as he learns to hope in God, and to hope nowhere else, his fear of God will become more and more operative upon his entire nature and life.

I should like you also to notice that the persons favored of God are represented *as a sort of sacred blending of different characters.* "Them that fear Him"—"those that hope in His mercy." These two things, fear of God and hope in His mercy, go well together, and what God has joined, let no man put asunder! Blessed is that man who has a trembling fear concerning his sinnership, who knows that he deserves the deepest Hell, bows before God under the burden of sin and always loathes himself to think that he should have been such a sinner—but who also hopes in God's mercy! He is sure of sin, but equally sure of sin's forgiveness. He is humbled by guilt, but equally rejoicing in the fullness of that Atonement which has covered his transgression and cast his iniquity into the depths of the sea! I fear because I am such a great sinner. I hope because Christ is such a great Savior! I am down in the very depths whenever I think of my guilt, crying out unto God, but I am also up in the very heights as I think of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ and am led, thereby, to hope in the mercy of God! It is a beautiful blend, that fear of God, and hope in His mercy!

It is well every day to have this sacred blending in another fashion, to be always afraid of yourself, fearful to begin the day without praying, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," never indulging in self-confidence in the least, yet always hoping in the mercy of God that He will keep you, and never suffer you to perish, for He has said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." This is a blessed blending of fear and hope, fearing before God, knowing what a frail and feeble creature you are and yet confident in the Lord, knowing how mighty, how faithful and how unchangeable He is to keep the souls that are committed to His care!

Then there is that holy form of fear which causes a jealous anxiety concerning yourself. I do not wish to ever be rid of that kind of fear.

There is a doubting of yourself which it is well to cultivate until honest and faithful self-examination has enabled you, in all impartiality, to conclude that you are the child of God. But, oh, never let that fear degenerate into a looking to frames and feelings as your ground of confidence! Let your hope always be in God's mercy, whatever may be the result of your self-examination. These two things should always go together—"Lord, search me, and try me, and know my ways." "Yet, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You, and that my hope is fixed upon You, and I do not doubt that You are able to keep that which I have committed to You." There, you see, is the fear of the Lord, but there is also hope in His mercy. And these two streams run side by side in the life of the man in whom God takes pleasure.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, to turn the text around the other way, I trust we shall always have a hope of final perseverance. He who has began the good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Are we, therefore, as some suppose we might be, careless about how we live? Oh, no! We are afraid of sinning! The very shadow of sin is obnoxious to us! We hate the garment spotted by the flesh. The very appearance of evil terrifies us. How is that consistent with the full belief in our perseverance unto the end? If we cannot explain it, many of us know that it is practically so.

So also we have a hope, most sure and steadfast, that we ourselves shall, like our Representative, enter into Heaven. But for all that we have a daily fear lest we should seem to come short of it! We know that "there remains a rest to the people of God," and we are persuaded that we belong to that happy company. Yet we keep under our body and bring it into subjection, lest that, by any means, after having preached to others, we ourselves should become castaways. If you ask, "How can a man feel these two things?" I answer—he does feel them and if he is born of God, and God delights in him—he feels them pretty much with equal force. As two battledores keep up the shuttlecock, so often I believe a man is kept in his right place by the action of these two contrary forces as they seem to be. As the earth goes round the sun, keeping in its orbit, it is under two influences—the centrifugal that would drive it off at a tangent and the centripetal that would pull it into the sun at once—but between the two, it keeps its proper course, and so does the Christian. Oh, that the centripetal force might speedily conquer the centrifugal, that we might fly unto our God and be forever with Him rejoicing in the fullness of eternal happiness!

I hope, Brothers and Sisters, that we who believe have a hope of perfection. In some senses, we have it already, for we are complete in Christ Jesus and accepted in the Beloved. But even that blessed assurance is attended with a measure of fear. We are mourning our transgressions, our defects and our shortcomings. We are not what we ought to be, we are not what we wish to be, we are not what we shall be—and while we grasp the, "*shall be,"* with the hand of faith, we sigh to think that as yet we have realized so little of its blessedness! Brothers and Sisters, may God grant to us hope whenever we have fear, and fear whenever we have hope. May we have hope in God's power to deliver us when we are under the fear of any trial or danger! May we have hope in God's Providence to arrange for us whenever we are poor, or sick, or in any straits or difficulties! When we have any fear of God's wrath, let us have hope in His pity, and whenever we are doubting or troubled, let us have hope in God's promises which cannot fail, but, in due season, shall surely be fulfilled.

This fear, mingled with hope, is, I believe, to be the contexture of our religious life. I know that it is of mine with regard to the world at large and the Church at large. I have a daily fear and trembling for the state of the Church of this present time. If anybody asks the watchman what he sees, I answer that I see no morning coming, but deeper darkness constantly falling upon us. Yet even that fear is mixed with hope, for I am certain that God's Truth will, in the end, win the day. It does not matter which way the current of modern thought may happen to run, the Truth

of God will come to the front, by-and-by. Puritan Divines are at a great discount today, but I believe that some of us will live to see them prized more than they ever were! The Doctrines of Grace are, for a while, trod in the mire, but after infidelity has emptied the chapels, and the churches have lost the true missionary spirit, they will come back again to the grand old Truths of the Gospel, and we who are spared shall see a revival of them such as our hearts have longed for! Whatever we fear for Zion in her travail, we have hope in the birth that shall come of it by God's good Grace!

This same principle ought, I think, to be applied to our ordinary daily life. We hope in God's mercy whenever we are in trouble, but we fear whenever we are prosperous. If we are in health, then we fear, for we may be struck down in a moment. If we are sick, then we hope, for we may be raised up just as quickly. If we are in adversity, then we hope, for the longest tide turns, at last. When we are prospering, then we fear and tremble for all the goodness that God causes to pass before us. I, for one, must say that I usually feel confident and joyous whenever I am in trouble. But whenever I have a grand day of success, I go home sinking into my shoes, for I am always afraid that something evil will follow!

It is with that blended hope and fear that we come to God in prayer—trembling to take upon ourselves to speak to Him, for we are but dust and ashes—yet coming with holy boldness to the Throne of the heavenly Grace. In this way, also, we go to our service for our Lord. Luther said that, often, when he went to preach, his knees knocked together for fear. But when he was preaching, he had such hope in God's mercy that he was like a lion! That is the way we expect to die. We will go to our dying bed and gather up our feet with fear, for we are men—but also with hope, for we are men of God—fearing the Lord, but hoping in His mercy!

III. I have not time to preach upon the blessings implied in this Divine favor, so I will give you only an outline of them.

When God takes pleasure in any man, the outcome of His favor may be learned from the pleasure which we take in our own child. For instance, when any mother takes pleasure in her child, she likes to *think* of her child, she likes to *look* at her child, she likes to *speak* to her child, she likes to *minister* to her child. She loves her child's prattling talk, its little broken syllables are all music to her ears. She takes pleasure in all that her child is, in all it does, in all it is to be. It is altogether a delight to her. Now, without enlarging upon this point, I will say that if you fear the Lord and hope in His mercy, God takes as much delight in you as you do in your dear child—and far more, because God's is an infinite mind and from it there comes infinite delight, so that He views you with infinite complacency!

Can you believe it? You do not view yourself so—I hope that you do not, but God *sees you in Christ*. He sees that in you that is yet to be in you! He sees in you that which will make you grow into a heavenly being and, therefore, He takes delight in you. It does not matter what others think of you. I want you to go home and feel, "If my Heavenly Father takes delight in me, it really does not concern me if my fellow creatures do not understand or appreciate me." If you and I want to be pleased by other people's good opinion, we shall lay ourselves open to be wounded

by other people's *bad* opinion. Live so as to please *God* and if your fellows are not pleased, well then, they must be displeased. It should be the one aim of your life to be able to say, "I do always those things which please Him." Walk with God by faith, as Enoch did, that you may have a like testimony to his, "he pleased God." And if you have pleased God, what matters it who is not pleased? Therefore, let us rejoice and be glad, and praise the name of the Lord, for He "takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy."

I trust that there is some poor sinner who can squeeze into the Kingdom of God through that description. "I fear Him," says one, "I have a feeble hope in His mercy." God bless you, dear Friend! He takes pleasure in you. If you are but consciously guilty of sin and, therefore, fear—and if you are but believingly looking to Christ, alone, and, therefore hope, then you are His, and His forever! The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 147.

This Book of Psalms ends its golden stream in a cataract of praise. The last Psalms are Hallelujah Psalms. This one begins and ends, as several others do, with "Hallelujah."

Verse 1. *Praise you the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God.* He is, "our God," whether He is the God of other men or not. He is "our God" by His choice of us, and by our choice of Him—"our God" by eternal Covenant, to whom we also pledge ourselves *"This* God is our God forever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death." Then let us "sing praises unto our God," for, "it is good" so to do.

1. *For it is pleasant; and praise is comely.* It is the most pleasurable of all exercises! It is the occupation of Heaven. "It is pleasant." It is delightful to the heart. Nothing tends to lift us out of sorrow and trouble like giving ourselves to singing the high praises of God. "It is good." "It is pleasant." "It is comely." It is becoming, fitting, beautiful. Praise and Jehovah should go together. He is so worthy to be praised that to withhold His praises would be an uncomely thing! But to adore Him, to magnify Him, is the very beauty of holiness.

2. *The LORD does build up Jerusalem: He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.* There is the first reason for praise. The Jews were pleased to behold their city rising out of the heap of ruins. They were glad to see the scattered ones, the outcasts, coming back to their native place and entering into citizenship in Zion. Shall not the Church of God, of which Jerusalem was a type, praise God that He is steadily and solidly building up a Church to His praise and Glory? He is building it out of strange materials—outcast sinners who were far from Him by wicked works are brought near by the blood of Christ! Stones from Nature's quarry are changed into living stones and then built up into a living Temple for His praise. "Jehovah does build up Jerusalem." Not the minister, not the workers in the Church, but the Lord Himself does it! "He gathers together the outcasts of Israel." An uplifted Christ draws all men to Him! The gathering power is with Him. "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." Let

us praise God that this takes place, in a measure, in our midst, and in other Churches where His name is honored.

3. *He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.* He is such a condescending God that He walks the hospitals and is familiar with despondency—and enters in sympathy into the cases of distress which others shun because they are unable to help. Where He comes as the Good Physician, "He heals the broken in heart."

4. *He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names.* I call your attention, dear Friends, to the wonderful change from the sick to the stars—from the broken in heart to the starry hosts of Heaven! Our God is equally at home with the little and with the great—with stars, which to us are countless—and with men, who to us are comfortless. God is just as great in dealing with our sorrows as in guiding the stars in their courses! He is as great as He is good, and as good as He is great!

5. *Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite.* There are three things here predicated of Him—first, that He is great in Himself, great in the vastness of His Being. Next, that He is of great power and, then, that He is of great, yes, of *infinite understanding*. Here is the mercy of it all, that He brings that greatness, that vastness of power, that infinity of knowledge to bear upon poor broken hearts—that He is just as wise in meeting our distresses as He is in marshalling the stars that He has made. Oh, what a God is ours!

6. *The LORD lifts up the meek; He casts the wicked down to the ground.* Ours is an amazing God. There is none like He. He is undoing all the things that are, turning things upside down. The lowly, He lifts up, but the proud, He throws down to the ground, even into the dust. This is His way and this is always a special note in the songs of God's people. Remember how Mary sang, "He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent empty away"? This singular behavior of our God, who has no respect unto the persons of men, is a special cause for our thankfulness. Therefore, let us magnify His name!

7. *Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God.* Let every form of melody and harmony be consecrated to Him. Give Him thanks-*giving* and thanks-*living. A*nd as He is always giving to you, take care that you give to Him what you can—namely, your thanks.

8, 9. *Who covers the Heaven with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow upon the mountains. He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.* God, the Infinite One, makes the clouds—not the laws of Nature, which are dead, inoperative things without Him! But Jehovah Himself fashions the clouds and prepares the rain. There is an Infinite Wisdom about the preparation of every raindrop and the sending of it in such form and way that it shall be balanced upon each blade of grass and shall hang there glittering in its perfection, and nourish even the least herb of the field. Only Infinite Wisdom could have thought of or prepared a single shower of rain! This rain is for the grass—does God think of the *grass*? Yes, not only of the cedars of Lebanon, but of grass, and not only of the grass that grows in the fruitful meadow, but of those little tufts which are, here and there, upon the

rugged mountains! He thinks of clouds, of rain and of grass which He makes to grow upon the mountains, that He may feed cattle. Does God, the high and lofty One, stoop to give to the beast His food? Ah, and more than that! He feeds all those wild birds that seem of no use to men—even the young ravens which clamor for the parent bird to return and fill them when they are hungry. Does God turn feeder of ravens? Ah, so it is. Then, again, blessed be His name! Praise you the Lord, for it is good to sing praises to such a condescending God as this! I am sure that you can draw the inferences for your own comfort. Do you seem like a little bit of grass on the bare mountainside? He has clouds and rain for you! Do you seem like a neglected bird in its nest, crying for food? He who feeds the ravens will feed you! The Hebrew has it, "the sons of the ravens," and if God gives food to the sons of the ravens, He will certainly feed His own sons!

10, 11. *He delights not in the strength of the horse. He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.* Again, you see, it is the same strain. It is not the great things or the mighty things that attract Him, but the little things, and the weak things, and the despised things.

12, 13. *Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you.* There shall be special hallelujahs from God's own people. His holy city and His holy hill should magnify the thrice-holy God. O Beloved, if we are, indeed, children of that Jerusalem which is from above, which is the mother of all Believers, let us prepare a new song to the Lord our God for all His mercy to us! Praise Him in your own houses, in "Jerusalem." Praise Him in *His* own house, in "Zion." Let your praise thus be continuous, where you dwell and where He dwells! "He has strengthened the bars of your gates." The fortifications are finished and He has made all secure. Therefore, magnify His name.

14. *He makes peace in your borders, and fills you with the finest of the wheat.* When the Church is peaceful and when the Gospel fills the saints—and they feed upon it and feel it to be the very finest of the wheat—should not God be praised? Does not the hallelujah come in here, again? Praise you the Lord for spiritual meat, and spiritual peace, and spiritual security!

15. *He sends forth His commandment upon earth: His Word runs very swiftly.* Oriental kings made a point of having swift postal arrangements by which they could send their decrees to the extremity of their dominions, sometimes on horses, and sometimes on swift camels. But God's command, God's decree, God's "Word runs very swiftly." He dwells in the midst of His people and He sends forth from Zion His decree. He dispatches His couriers and they run very swiftly to work His will. It is so in Providence—it is assuredly so in Grace! As to Providence, see what God does—

16. *He gives snow like wool.* People say, nowadays, "It snows." They said among the Hebrews, "HE gives snow." There seems to be a tendency to get further and further away from God in these very learned days. If this is all that science can do for us—put God further off—it shall be our injury rather than our blessing! "He gives snow like wool." The flakes are

like the fleece and fall softly. Snow clothes the earth with a white, warm garment, as the well-washed sheep are clothed with wool.

16. *He scatters the hoarfrost like ashes.* There are black frosts and white frosts—and you know how, sometimes, vegetation appears to be burnt up with cold. It is God who does it all—

"He scatters the hoarfrost like ashes."

17. *He casts forth His ice like morsels.* The hailstones come like morsels—like *crumbs*, that is the word—like crumbs of ice, or, as the ice is formed upon the lake, it comes like *crusts*. Either way, "He casts forth His ice like morsels."

17. *Who can stand before His cold?* If God displays Himself as fire, who can stand against His flames? Or if He chooses to display Himself in cold, there is as much of consuming force about intense cold as about vehement heat! "Who can stand before His cold?"

18. *He sends out His Word, and melts them.* The icebergs float southward and are melted. The rivers that had been held in chains of ice leap into liberty and all at the Word of the Lord—"He sends out His word, and melts them."

18. *He causes His wind to blow and the waters flow.* "This is the result of the laws of nature." So say those who are still in nature's darkness! "This is the work of God," say those who have come out of that darkness into His marvelous light!

19. *He shows His word to Jacob.* Observe that when God's people know God's Word, it is as much the work of God as when the waters are loosed from their bands of ice!

19. *His statutes and His judgments to Israel.* The Lord does it according to His own Sovereign will.

20. *He has not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise you the LORD.* Here, you see again, is a peculiar reason for thanksgiving! "Praise you Jehovah." "It is good to sing praises unto *our* God, for He has dealt with us in a special manner, with peculiar and discriminating Grace. 'He has not dealt so with any nation; and as for His judgments, they have not known them.'" Therefore are they silent, but let us not be dumb. With such a Revelation as we have, with such teachings of His Spirit to make the Lord known to us, let us not be ungrateful, but always praise His name!

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

JOY IN PLACE OF SORROW
NO. 2525

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 11, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 10, 1884.

"And you now, therefore, have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you."
John 16:22.

JOY is the normal condition of a Believer. His proper state, his healthy state, is that of happiness and gladness. As I have often reminded you, it has become a Christian duty for Believers to be glad. "Rejoice in the Lord," is a precept given to us over and over again and I believe that, broadly speaking, the general condition of God's people is one of joy. It is not a falsehood if we say, "Happy are you, O Israel!" True Christians are the happiest people under Heaven. They have many sorrows, but there is a text which says, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." And old Master Brooks has a good note upon the passage. He says that it does not say, "As sorrowful, yet *as* always rejoicing." The *"quasi"—the* "as"—relates only to the *sorrow.* The joy is real, without any *"quasi."* Christians have *quasi* sorrow, but they have *real* rejoicing! They are oftentimes as if they were sad—yes, as if they were, of all men, most miserable, but in the very depths of their soul they have "the peace of God which passes all understanding," to keep their heart and mind through Christ Jesus.

I will venture to assert that Christians, at least, always have matter for joy. They are never short of material out of which they may make melody unto the Lord! If they will, they may rejoice, for they have plenty of causes for joy. The Lord has done great things for them and they ought to add, "Therefore we are glad." And, as they have plenty of matter for joy, so they have ample motive for joy, for when they joy and rejoice, they glorify God, they prove the reality of their faith and they make their religion attractive to others!

The joy of the Lord is their strength, their beauty, their charm. There are always reasons why a Christian should be happy and as he has matter for joy and motive for joy, so he always has a measure of joy! He may seem to be overwhelmed with trouble, but his boat still floats. He may seem to run short of joy, as the widow in Elijah's day ran short of meal and oil, but there shall always be a cake for him to eat and a little oil shall still remain in the cruse. His joy shall never utterly fail him—he shall always have a sufficient measure of hope to enable him to keep his lamp alight in the darkest night.

Above and beyond all this, the Christian always has a remainder of joy which shall be his in due time. What he has not yet in his own hand, is in the pierced hands of Jesus, held there fast and safe against all comers! And he may and he should always sing—

"Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not yet tasted."

Some people have but little in possession at present, but they have a reversionary interest in a large estate. And it is so with us. We have a heritage of joy that as yet we have not entered upon, but it is ours by a covenant of salt, and none can break the sacred inheritance. So let us again take up the language of the hymn we sang at the beginning of the service—

"The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets,
Before we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets."

Thus you see, dear Friends, that Believers have matter for joy, motive for joy, a measure of joy already possessed and a greater remainder of joy yet to be realized! God's people are a happy people, a blessed people. May my soul always be numbered among them!

Now, coming to the text, which is intended to promote our joy, I gather two observations—first, that the Lord Jesus *enters into our* sorrows. He does not overlook them, but He says, "You now, therefore, have sorrow." Secondly, *the Lord Jesus creates our joy.* "But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you."

I. First, then, dear Friends, you who are sorrowful, listen to this former part of the discourse. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST ENTERS INTO OUR SORROWS.

One point in which He enters into them is this—He *sees our quickness in sorrowing.* Perhaps you did not notice that in the text, but it is there. You observe, in the 20th verse, that Jesus said to His disciples, "You shall be sorrowful," and He compared them to a woman in travail. But then He did not say what we might have thought He would have said, "You *will,* therefore, have sorrow," but He said, "You *now*, therefore, have sorrow." He saw their faces begin to pale before the sorrow had really come. He had not gone away from them, for there He stood in their midst—but in the expectation that He would go, their eyes began to grow dim and the tears commenced to roll down their cheeks, so He said as He looked at them, "You now, therefore, have sorrow." And, Beloved, you and I also are very quick at this work of sorrowing. I wish that we anticipated our joys with half the readiness that we anticipate our sorrows! We would be much happier if we did, but there is many a child of God who cries long before he is hurt and sorrows long before his troubles actually come to him.

We often run to meet our troubles—we seem as if we were hungry to have our mouth full of bitterness and eager to drink the waters of Marah. It is a pity that it should be so with us. These disciples had not yet lost their Master—He was still with them and a child-like spirit might have

said, "Ah, well, blessed Master, if You are only going to be with us five minutes, we may as well be happy for that five minutes! If You are going away in half-an-hour, at any rate You are here as yet. Let us not begin to be cast down until the parting moment really comes." "Ah!" you say, "but it was very natural that they should begin to sorrow." Yes, and that is exactly what I say. It is very natural, it is so wonderfully natural that it is pretty nearly *universal* with us! But it is not any the better for being natural, is it? You take your medicine when the proper time comes for taking it, but do not be taking it all day long! There are many Christian people who chew their pills instead of swallowing them. If they took their sorrows when they came and accepted them as having been sent straight from God, there would not be half the bitterness in their mouths that there now is when they begin to think concerning some future trial, "Oh, it is coming! I know it is coming! I can see that it is coming!" The shadow of the sorrow is often worse than the sorrow, itself, and as Young speaks of him who "feels a thousand deaths in fearing one," so I doubt not that we often feel a thousand sorrows in anticipating one. They will come soon enough, Brothers and Sisters—do not go to meet them! Go forth to meet the *Bridegroom*, but there cannot be any particular need to meet your *troubles*. Let them come when they must come—and welcome them—but why should you conjure up those which, perhaps, have no existence at all?

Notice, next, that our Lord has a very quick eye to observe our *sorrows which relate to Himself.* He says, "You now, therefore, have sorrow." That is, "*sorrow* because I am going away from you. Sorrow because I am about to die." I think that the Lord loves His people to have that kind of sorrow. While the Bridegroom is with the children of the bride chamber, it is fit and comely that they should rejoice. But when the Bridegroom is gone, it is loyalty to Him and it is a fit and comely thing that they should sorrow. Now, Brothers and Sisters, whenever your heart gets heavy because you have lost your Lord's company, it is a proper sorrow. Whenever you hear His name blasphemed, whenever you find false doctrine preached instead of the Truth, whenever you see men undermining the blessed Gospel, when you notice apostates turning this way and that and forsaking the paths of Christ, you *should* sorrow. And, if you do, I believe that your Lord looks upon such sorrow as a token of your loyal affection to Him and, so far from condemning it, He justifies it and He says, "You now, therefore, have sorrow." He looks at the reason for it and He says, "This is not a causeless grief."

He did not blame the disciples for sorrowing when He was gone. No, He expected that they would do so and He saw the reason for their grief and spoke tenderly of it. If there can be found a reason for the sorrow of a child of God, Christ will find it. I know that, often, worldlings are unable to understand our sorrow. They say, "Why does this man fret and worry? He has everything that heart can wish." But the Savior knows the secrets of the soul and He puts His finger on the source of our grief and says, "You now, therefore, have sorrow." And if that, "therefore," is be-

cause of something touching Himself and His Kingdom, and His work in the world, He justifies the sorrow and He will help us to bear it and, in due time, He will remove it! Let us, then, bless our Lord Jesus Christ that while He knows how quick we are to sorrow before we need to, yet He does approve of our sorrowing when there is a need for it and specially when it concerns His own dear Self.

Observe, further, that our blessed Master is quick to notice *the limit of our sorrow.* Take your pencil, if you will, and put a black mark under that third word in our text, "And you now, therefore, have sorrow." I feel as if I could almost kiss that word, "You now, therefore, have sorrow." What does that word, "now," mean? Well, sometimes, it only means just the next few minutes—"You now, therefore, have sorrow." But, "now," cannot mean long—if, "you now, therefore, have sorrow," it does not mean that you will have sorrow forever! Listen—"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Did you ever read that in the Psalm? Sing it in deep bass tones! Growl it out if you will! "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Up rises another singer and sends up the soprano note higher than my voice can go—"But the Lord delivers him out of them all!" And that glorious note seems to kill the other. "You now, therefore, have sorrow."

Ah, but what is that little "now"? It is a mere drop that trembles on my fingertips! It is "an inch of time, a moment's space." "You now, therefore, have sorrow." Perhaps tomorrow morning all that sorrow will be over and if not, that, "now," is driving away on red-hot axles and will soon be gone! And there shall come the hereafter of endless joy and boundless bliss. Our Lord Jesus Christ recollects this fact when you do not. You say, "I am so sorrowful, so broken down." And the Savior puts His dear pierced hand on you, and He says, "Yes, you are so *now,* that is all. It is only *now,* and it will all soon be ended. And then you will take your harp down from the willows and sing and rejoice with the happiest and the merriest of the saints of God."

Notice, also, that the Lord Jesus Christ so enters into our sorrow that *He has an eye to the outcome of it all.* He says to each Believer, "Yes, dear Child, you have sorrow, you have great sorrow, but you know what it is to produce. A woman, when she is in travail, has great sorrow, but in a short time her sorrow is turned into joy when her child is born into the world." So every sorrow of a child of God is the birth pang of a joy. I do not know whether you have noticed, but I have, that most of our joys, if they are of an earthly kind, are very expensive before long. You cannot delight in the creature without sorrow coming of it. You cannot love your wife, your child with a most lawful and laudable love, but one of these days it will be most expensive love—when the loved ones are taken away, or they sicken and suffer. The more we love them, the more they cost us! But our *sorrows* are fish that come to us with money in their mouths. Whenever they come, they always bring us joy! If you dig round the roots of a deep sorrow, you shall find tubers of joy, with stores of heavenly bliss laid up in them! They who sorrow for Christ shall soon have Christ

to make them forget their sorrow. They who sorrow for His Kingdom, or sorrow for more of His righteousness, or sorrow for more of His likeness, or sorrow for closer communion with Him shall, before long, find to the delight of their soul that their sorrow is turned into joy!

Is not that a wonderful promise? "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." If any man here were greatly in debt and someone were to say, "All your debts shall be transformed into assets," well, it is clear that then the richest man here would be the man that had the biggest debts! So is it with our sorrows—the more of them that we have, the more joys we shall have, because they are to be turned into joy. If, as Believers, we have much sorrow, we shall have much joy coming out of it! Therefore, with the Apostle, "we glory in tribulations, also," and triumph in the afflictions and trials of this mortal life, seeing that they shall work our lasting good.

Once more upon this first point, our Lord Jesus Christ sees that our *sorrows will come to an end,* for He says, "You now, therefore, have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." The Lord knows that His people are not hopelessly locked up in prison, they are not to be eternally in the shade. They shall soon come out of their sorrows and the darkness shall be turned into the brightness of the day. Our Lord can see this and He would have us see it, too, so He points it out to us. O sons and daughters of sorrow, I pray the Comforter to apply this Word with power to your souls!

II. Now I have to play on a higher string. Let me have your most earnest attention while I dwell for a little while on the latter part of our subject—the Lord Jesus creates our joy. He says, in the second half of the text, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you."

Observe, first, that when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to make His people glad, He *always touches the very center of their grief.* The disciples' grief was that Jesus would soon be gone from them. "Well," He said, "I will see you again." So, Beloved, when the Lord Jesus shall come to you in your hour of sorrow, He will touch the center of your grief, whatever it is. There is a wonderful adaptation in the Word of God to the peculiarities of all His people. There are some very odd texts in the Bible—do you know why they are there? It is because there are so many odd people about—and those texts are meant specially for them! You may see upon a locksmith's ring a number of strangely-shaped keys—it is because there are so many strangely-made locks! And in God's Word there is a key to fit every lock. There is a key for the strange lock that is inside your heart, my Brother or my Sister, and the Lord knows how to meet your case exactly and to touch your out-of-the-way, singular, special, peculiar, idiosyncrasy of sorrow! He can get at it and put it right away from you.

Notice, next, that *the Good Physician makes the plaster wider than the wound.* He says not what we might have thought that He would say, "You will sorrow because you cannot see Me, but you shall see Me again." That

plaster would have just fitted the sore, but He says, "*I will see you again."* That is a great deal better! That covers the sorrow and covers all the wounds of all God's people right down to this day, for though we do not see Him again just yet, yet He is still seeing us again as much as ever He saw those disciples when He stood in the midst of them and said, "Peace be unto you." Oh, I love this Characteristic of my Master that, when He meets a poor Believer who asks Him for a penny, He says, "Here, take seven." When we knock at His door and say, "A friend, who is on a journey, has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him; lend me three loaves," He says, "Take as many as you need." His liberality far outruns our needs and our desires—and He is both able and willing "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." So that our Lord Jesus Christ creates our joy by touching the very center of our grief and then by covering it with that which is greater than the grief itself!

Note, further, whenever the Lord Jesus Christ comes to one of His sorrowing people to give him joy, He *gives it most effectually.* What does He say to His disciples? "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." That is more than any mere man could say. When I get to talking with God's downcast people, I can say to them, "I will see you again and talk with you again, and I shall be glad if I can make your heart rejoice." But I can never be sure that I shall succeed in cheering them. You and I, dear Friends, are very poor comforters, and we often fail. But when the Good Physician comes to any of His patients, He knows how to make the medicine effectual! "I *will* see you again, and your heart *shall* rejoice." See how the Lord Jesus Christ handles human hearts. This morning we had a grand subject in which we showed how the Lord, in His Omnipotence, by His authority and power, cast out devils with a word. [Sermon #1765, Volume 30, *An Astounding Miracle*—read/download the entire sermon for free at http://www.spurgeongems.org] And here we have another instance of His Omnipotence! He does not say, "I will try to cheer your heart." He says, "Your heart shall rejoice," just as if He had our hearts in His hand and could do with them as He pleased, which is really the case! His Divine Spirit can now so effectually apply the comforts of the Word that it shall not be said, "You *ought* to rejoice," but, "You *shall* rejoice." The Lord can lift up the light of His Countenance upon us till we are glad in Him.

I want you also to notice that while the Lord's application of joy to the heart is very effectual, it is *very deep and very full.* "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." When the worldling is glad, you hear him laughing from his teeth outwards! He puts on a merry look, yet all the while there is heaviness in his heart. His wine vats are full to bursting and the sound of the buyer is in his ears, but there is a fear in his conscience and his soul is disquieted. But when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to deal with His people, He deals with their *hearts*, with the inmost core of their being, with the very center of their soul! "Your heart shall rejoice." Do you not know what this experience is, beloved Brothers and Sisters? I think you do. Sometimes you could not explain your joy, it is too deep—it is so excessive that words and noise of any kind seem

quite out of place. You need to get alone and, in the silence of your soul, sit still, like David before the Lord, and there to drink in full draughts of His love. "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice."

True Christians need never covet the poor joy of worldlings. We cannot fall into the insanity of living with such miserable ends and objects as those which are compassed within the short pale of our existence here below. It has become slavery to us and I bear witness for myself and for you, also, that we do not forsake the pleasures of the world because we think that we are denying ourselves! It is no self-denial to us, for they would not please us. I have gone by a whole line of sties and seen the pigs feeding greedily, but I never thought that I was denying myself because I did not feed with them. I never wished to have a law passed that the unclean beasts should not have their swill. No, let them have it, and as much as they can eat! And we say just the same of the pleasures of the carnal man. We do not envy him that which is so great a relish, it is no self-denial to us to go without it—we have come out of that style of living and we do not want to go back to it. When the man says that he is perfectly happy and satisfied, we think, "Just so, no doubt you are, and we have seen many a fat bullock in the field look perfectly content." But Christians have different pleasures and higher joys! And we cannot be bullocks, we cannot be swine. We have been brought out of that kind of merely animal life! We have been lifted up into another and a higher style of living and it is nothing short of a miracle of the Divine hand which has brought us right out of it, so that we have done with it forever, and loathe it, and could not go back to it under any circumstances whatever! Old things are passed away! Behold, all things are become new. The Lord has brought us out of the region of darkness into His marvelous light and delivered us forever from the power and dominion of Satan!

I saw, the other day, a blind fish that had been accustomed to live in a dark cave. It had not any eyes and it did not *need* any eyes because it lived where light never came. There are some people who are just like that fish—they are perfectly satisfied to be blind and, what is more—there are some blind persons who declare that there is no such thing as light, for they say that they never saw it! Just so—they have not any eyes with which to see it. The carnal mind cannot understand the things of God. There is not the faculty in it by which it can understand them. The carnal mind has not the Spirit of God! Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned and until God, the Holy Spirit, comes and creates in us the eye-faculty called the spirit, by which we become body, soul, and spirit, we are like the blind fish which has no eyes. We are just mere men, but not men of God. We have not passed into the new world of spiritual perceptions. But, by the Grace of God, many of us have been made partakers of the Divine Nature and so have been permitted to share the joy of which our text speaks.

But I must get to the end of my discourse by reminding you that the glory of the Christian's joy lies in the fact that it is *permanent*. "Your joy no man takes from you." "Well," says one, "I wonder what that joy is?"

Let me tell you and then I will close. The sorrow about which Christ spoke to His disciples was that He was going away from them. Therefore the joy of which He spoke is that now He sees us again! I want you, dear Friends, specially to notice, as I have already told you, that it does not say that *you* see Him, but that *He* sees you and, therefore, to you, Peter's words may be applied, "Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see Him not, yet, believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

What, then, is our joy? It is, first, that Christ is not dead. He is alive, He is risen from the dead! Next, He reigns as well as lives, and He reigns for us—He is ruling all things on our behalf and, as He sees us with His royal eyes, He also pleads for us before the eternal Throne of God! And He is coming again! We know not when, but we know that He is coming quickly and that He is already on the road. He shall descend in like manner as they saw Him go up into Heaven.

All this is the joy of the Christian which no man takes from him! No man shall ever take from me the joy that Christ rose from the dead! I know that He did—there is no historical fact that is so certainly attested as this, that Christ died, was buried and, on the third day, rose again from the dead! And therein I do rejoice, yes, and will rejoice! If He rose not from the dead, then my preaching is vain and your faith is also vain—but as He surely rose from the dead, then every trouble has gone. I do not think that those poor disciples had any joy while Christ was in the grave. They could not rejoice then. Their big sorrow swallowed up all joy. And I do not think that if you and I were what we ought to be, we should have any sorrow, now that Christ is out of the grave—the joy because He has risen ought to swallow up every sorrow that we have—it should be a joy that no man can take from us!

There is this further joy that no man can take from me, that Jesus Christ reigns, King of kings and Lord of lords! I have often told you how, many years ago, that doctrine saved my reason. And I am alive and here to preach because of that glorious Truth of God. After the terrible tragedy in the Surrey Gardens Music Hall, my mind seemed to fail me, and my reason reeled. I had to get away and be alone. And so I walked about a friend's garden. Someone watched me, for they did not know what might happen to me—I was so unmanned that I did not seem able to pray or to read the Scriptures. But as I was walking in the garden, there came to me this passage, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." And I said to myself, "I am a poor soldier, wounded in the battle, and lying in the ditch. But there rides the King and all is well with Him, for He is King of kings and Lord of lords!" I seemed to rouse myself up out of the ditch and cry, "Hallelujah be to His blessed name!" and in that moment all my faculties returned to me! I walked into the house, and said, "I am perfectly well. I can preach next Sunday." And I did preach, the following Sabbath, from the text that had been so blessed to my own heart and mind. [Sermon #101, Volume 2, *The Exaltation of* Christ—read/download the entire sermon for free at http://www.spurgeongems.org]

What matters it what becomes of me? Whether I live or whether I die, no man can take this joy from me, that Jesus Christ lives, reigns, triumphs and that He shall surely come to judge the quick and the dead according to my Gospel!

I preach to you, Beloved, a joy that no man takes from you! If you begin to live by your own feelings, you will sometimes be up and sometimes down, and be always unsettled. Now live on this Truth of God—first, that Jesus died. Then if you believe on Him, you died in Him. Next, that He was buried and that your sins were buried with Him. Then, that He rose again and you rose in Him—and now that He lives and reigns forever and ever, your cause is safe in His hands and apart from your cause altogether, your spirit may rejoice that the cause of right, the cause of truth, the cause of God, is secure beyond all hazard because He who went away from us for a little while, though we have not seen Him, yet sees us, and our hearts do and will rejoice in Him! Blessed be His holy name!

I wish that all of you shared in this joy, but those who do not believe in Jesus cannot. Dear young people, I have a great longing that very early in life you should be reconciled to God by the death of His Son. It is such a joy to know the Lord early that I cannot understand why so many wish to put it off. There is a young man who wants to be married and he wrote to me to ask whether, on a certain day, I could marry him. I could not, for I could not be here, so I proposed to him to wait a week till I came back. Instead of which, he proposed that it should be a week *earlier*, as he said, to accommodate *me!* I notice that there is no wish to put off a wedding and I do not wonder that it is so, but I do marvel that, in the far higher joy of being married to Christ, the greater and truer delight of becoming one with Him forever, so many want it to be a week later, or a month later, or even a year later!

Oh, did you know that happy day when Jesus puts our sins away—if there were a time fixed and you knew it—I think you would grow almost impatient to have it even earlier! Do not postpone this heavenly marriage, I pray you, who have been at enmity against God! Do not put off being reconciled to Him, for he who fights with God had better quickly end the battle! So be silent and end all your discussions with God without a word unless it is such a word as this, "Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief!" God grant that you may be led to believe in Jesus *now,* for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 16:16-33.

Our Lord is speaking to His disciples before His departure from them to be crucified, and He says.

Verse 16. *A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father.* It is wonderful how He could talk thus calmly about His death, knowing that it would be

a death of bitter shame and terrible agony. Yet He does, as it were, pass over that view of it as He says, "A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me."—"Because I die?" No. "Because I am crucified?" No, but, "Because I go to the Father." Beloved, always think of your departure out of the world in the same light—"I go to the Father." Do not say, "I die. I languish upon the bed of pain. I expire." No, but, "I go to the Father."

17, 18. *Then said some of His disciples among themselves, What is this that He says unto us, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that He says, A little while? We cannot tell what He says.* Then why not ask Him? But are not you and I often very slow to ask the meaning of the Master's Words? You read in Scripture something that you cannot understand, and you say to yourself, "I cannot make out the meaning of that chapter." But do you always pray over it and ask the Writer to tell you what He intended when He wrote it? It is a grand thing to have this Inspired Book. But it is a grander thing, still, to have the Spirit of God, who inspired it, abiding with His people forever! But we fail to learn many a secret from the Word because we do not pray our way into it. He who does not know can scarcely have his ignorance pitied when it remains willful. If you can know for the asking, why not ask?

19. *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him, and said unto them, Do you inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me?* They might have inquired a long while among themselves and all in vain! But to go to their Lord was the short way out of the difficulty, for He could explain it. See how ready He is to explain, for He expounds the Truth even to those who had not asked for an exposition! In this matter, He was found of them that sought Him not. Knowing that they were desirous to ask, He accepted the will for the deed, the wish for the prayer—and He answered the secret longing of their heart.

20. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, That you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice.* "I am going away from you, and while I am gone, it will be all weeping and lamenting with *you*, but while I am gone the world shall have its hour of triumph—it shall think that I am slain and that My cause is defeated."

20, 21. *And you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail has sorrow because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.* So, when Christ came back again, they would remember no more the sorrow of their travail hour in which they saw Him bound, spat upon and taken off to execution—and mocked upon the tree. The joy that would come of it all would obliterate the remembrance of the sorrow!

22, 23. *And you now, therefore, have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you. And in*

that day you shall ask Me nothing. "You shall not need to make, anymore, inquiries of Me, for everything shall then be explained to you by the Spirit."

23. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you.* "This shall be one fruit of My passion, that, henceforth, whatever you shall ask of the Father, in My name, shall be given to you; and though you may not, perhaps, address your prayers to Me personally, yet addressed to the Father, in My name, they shall succeed."

24. *Hitherto have you asked nothing in My name.* "You have not yet learned how to use My name in prayer." Our Lord had not yet taught them so to pray, but now we know what it is to ask in the name of Christ—it is to pray with the authority of the risen and glorified Son of God!

24. *Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.* See how our Lord continues to drive at that point, for He would have His people happy. He wants you, Beloved, to be joy-full—full of joy! Not merely to have a little joy hidden away in a corner somewhere, but, "that your joy may be full."

25, 26. *These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time comes when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father. At that day you shall ask in My name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you.* Though that is, indeed, what our Lord does!

27. *For the Father Himself loves you.* "The Father, whom you are so apt to think of as sterner than Myself, and further off than I, the Son of Man am, 'the Father Himself loves you.'"

27. *Because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God.* Have you, dear Friends, love to Christ? Do you believe that Christ came forth from God? Then does the Father give His special love to you!

28. *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world. Again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.* Had He not clearly explained what He meant by being absent a little while, and then coming back again?

29, 30. *His disciples said unto Him, Lo, now speak You plainly, and speak no proverb. Now are we sure.* Now they can give reasons for the hope that is in them. "Now are we sure."

30. *That You know all things, and need not that any man should ask You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.* They are very positive, but notice the check that our Lord put upon all this confident assurance!

31, 32. *Jesus answered them, Do you now believe? Behold, the hour comes, yes, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone.* Whenever there is any boasting upon your lips, even though you may think that you can rightly say, "Now we are sure," stop a bit, dear Friends, stop a bit! We have not, any of us, all the good we think we have. No, they who think themselves perfect think the most amiss. They are altogether mistaken and there is some latent unbe-

lief even where faith is strongest. Christ still asks, "Do you now believe?" You have only to be sufficiently tried and to be tempted long enough—and in that very point where you think you are strongest you will fail. "Now are we sure," say the confident disciples. "Ah," says Christ, "do you now believe? Behold, the hour comes, yes, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone!"

32. *And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.* How gloriously is that blessed Truth of God put in just here! The awful solitude that Christ was about to pass through can hardly be understood by us. It was not only that every friend forsook Him, but that there was not, under Heaven, a single person who could sympathize with Him. He was going through deeps that no other could ever fathom. He was to bear grief which no other could ever bear! You may, indeed, sip of His cup, but you can never drink it to its dregs as He did! You may be baptized with His baptism; but into the depths of the abyss of woe into which He was immersed, you cannot go. "Alone! Alone!" Never was there a human being so much alone as was the Man, Christ Jesus, in that dread hour! And yet He says, "I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." O brave Master, make us also brave! May we be willing to stand alone for Your sake, and to feel that we are never so little alone as when we are alone with You!

33. *These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace.* Your Lord wants you to have peace. Come, then, you tried ones, you who are tossed about with a thousand troublous thoughts—it is Your Master's wish and will that you should have peace!

33. *In the world you shall have tribulation.* You have found that true, have you not? Perhaps you are finding it true just now. "In the world you shall have tribulation."

33. *But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.* And in that overcoming He has conquered for you, also, and He guarantees to you the victory in His name!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—720, 786, 722.

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"SPEAK, LORD!"
NO. 2526

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 18, 1897.
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"Then Samuel answered, Speak; for Your servant hears."
1 Samuel 3:10.

The child Samuel was favored above all the family in which he dwelt. The Lord did not speak by night to Eli, or to any of Eli's sons. In all that house, in all the rows of rooms that were round about the Tabernacle where the Ark of the Lord was kept, there was not one except Samuel to whom Jehovah spoke! The fact that the Lord should choose a child out of all that household and that He should speak to him, ought to be very encouraging to you who think yourself to be the least likely to be recognized by God. Are you so young? Yet, probably, you are not younger than Samuel was at this time. Do you seem to be very insignificant? Yet you can hardly be more so than was this child of Hannah's love! Have you many troubles? Yet you have not more, I daresay, than rested on young Samuel, for it must have been very hard for him, while so young a child, to part from his dear mother, to be so soon sent away from his father's house and so early made to do a servant's work, even though it was in the House of the Lord!

I have noticed how often God looks with eyes of special love upon those in a family who seem least likely to be so regarded. It was on Joseph, whom his brothers hated—it was upon the crown of the head of him who was separated from his brothers—that God's electing love descended! Why should it not come upon you? Perhaps, in the house where you live, you seem to be a stranger. Your foes are they of your own household! You have many sorrows and you think that waters of a full cup are wrung out to you, yet the Lord may have a very special regard for you. I invite you to hope that it is so, yes, and to come to Christ and put your soul's trust in Him—and then I am persuaded that you will find that it is so and you will have to say—"He drew me to Him with cords of a man, with bands of love. Because He loved me with everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness has He drawn me."

Notice, also, that while God had a very special regard for young Samuel, He had, in that regard, designs concerning the rest of the family. God's elect are chosen not merely for their own sake—they are chosen for God's name's sake—and they are also chosen for the sake of mankind in general. The Jews were chosen that they might preserve the oracles of God for all the ages and that they might keep alight the spark of Divine Truth that we Gentiles might afterwards see its brightness. And when God's special love is fixed upon one member of a family, I take it that

that one ought to say to himself or herself, "Am I not called that I may be a blessing in this family?" Young Samuel was to be God's voice to Eli. He was chosen to that end and in a much more pleasant way than Samuel was, I trust that you, dear Friend, favored of God, are intended to be a messenger of better tidings than Samuel had to carry—perhaps to an aged father whose eyes are growing dim. Perhaps to some wayward brother wandering in the world. Perhaps to some sister whose heart is careless about Divine things. I think the first instinct of one who has been, himself, called by Grace, is to go and call others.

When Christ appears to Mary, Mary runs to the disciples to tell them that the Lord has spoken to her. Samuel is chosen that he may carry the message to Eli—and let each Believer feel that he is favored of God that he may take a blessing to others—"for none of us lives to himself and no man dies to himself." I trust that we are not like the Dead Sea which perpetually drinks in Jordan's streams, but never gives the waters out and, therefore, it becomes saltier and yet more saltier—the lake of death. We are not to be receivers only, taking in the good that God sends by this means or by that, but we are to pour out as fast as He pours in, working out that which God works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Our subject is to be, God speaking with us. And I trust that everyone here who has any fear of God at all will take the prayer of Samuel and make it his or her own—"Speak; for Your servant hears."

I. And, first, I will speak to you upon the soul desiring—desiring to be spoken to by God. "Speak, Lord."

Oh, how often has our heart felt this desire in the form of a groaning that cannot be uttered! "Lord, I want to know You! You are behind a veil and I cannot come to You. I know that You are, for I see Your works, but, oh, that I could get some token from Yourself, if not for my eyesight, yet at least for my heart!" We cannot endure a dumb God. It is a very dreadful thing to have a dumb friend—a very painful thing to have a wife who never spoke with you or a husband who could never exchange a word with you, or a father or mother from whom you could never hear a single word of love—and the heart cannot bear to have a dumb God, it needs Him to speak!

For what reason does the soul desire God to speak to it? Well, first, it desires thus to be *recognized by God.* It seems to say, "Speak, Lord, just to give me a token of recognition, that I may know that I am not overlooked, that I am not flung away like a useless thing upon the world's dust heap, that I am not left to wander like a waif and stray, derelict, upon the ocean. Oh, that I may be sure that You see me, that You have some thoughts of love concerning me! How precious are Your thoughts to me, O God! If I do not know that You think of me, I pine, I die! Speak, Lord, just to show that You notice me. I am not worthy that You should regard me, but still speak to me, Lord, that I may know that You do observe me."

More than that, this desire of the soul is a longing *to be called* by God. When the Lord said to the child, "Samuel, Samuel," it was a distinct, personal call, like that which came to Mary. "The Master is come, and calls for you," or that which came to another Mary when the Lord said to her,

"Mary," and she turned and said, "Rabboni," that is to say, "my dear Master." All who have heard the Gospel preached have been called to some extent. The Word of God calls every sinner to repent and trust the Savior, but that call brings nobody to Christ unless it is accompanied by the special effectual call of the Holy Spirit. When that call is heard in the heart, then the heart responds! The general call of the Gospel is like the common "cluck" of the hen which she is always giving when her chickens are around her. But if there is any danger impending, then she gives a very peculiar call—quite different from the ordinary one—and the little chicks come running as fast as ever they can and hide for safety under her wings! That is the call we need—God's peculiar and effectual call to His own! And I would, if I could, put into the heart and mouth of each person now present this prayer, "Speak, Lord, speak to *me.* Call *me.* When You are calling this one and that, Lord, call *me* with the effectual call of Your Holy Spirit! Be pleased so to call me that, when I hear You saying, 'Seek you My face,' my heart may say unto You, 'Your face, Lord, will I seek.'"

"Speak, Lord, moreover, *that I may be instructed."* I am afraid that there are some persons who do not want to be instructed in the things of God. They are afraid of knowing too much. I know some good Christian people—good in their way—who cautiously avoid portions of Scripture that are contrary to their creed. And I know a good many more who, when they get hold of a text, stretch it a little, or squeeze it a little, to make it fit in with what they, by *prejudice*, think *ought* to be the Truth of God! But that should not be your method or mine. Let us say, "Speak, Lord, and say to me what You will. Whatever You have to say to me, Master, say on." The Lord Jesus may perhaps reply to us, "I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." Howbeit, it is for us to ask Him to lead us into all Truths of God. If there is a Truth that quarrels with you, depend upon it, there is something in *you* to quarrel with! You cannot alter the Truth of God—the simplest thing is to alter yourself! It is not for us to shorten the measure, but to endeavor to come up to it. Let us lay our hearts before God and pray Him to write His Truth upon them. Let us yield our understanding and every faculty that we have to the supreme sway of Jesus and, like Mary, sit down at His feet and receive His gracious Words. "Speak, Lord, to instruct me. Tell me all about this and that Truth which it is necessary for me to know."

We sometimes mean by this expression, "Speak, Lord, *for our guidance*." We have got into a great difficulty. We really do not know which way the road leads—to the right or to the left—and we may go blundering on and have to come all the way back again! So we especially need the Lord to speak to us for our guidance. It is an admirable plan to do nothing without prayer—neither to begin, nor continue, nor close anything except under Divine guidance and direction. "Speak, Lord. Give me any answer. If not by Urim and Thummim, yet by such means as You are pleased to use in these modern times. Speak, Lord, for whether You point me to the right or to the left, I will go whichever way You bid me go. Only let me hear Your voice behind me, saying, 'This is the way: walk you in it.'"

At times, also, we need the Lord's voice *for our comfort*. When the heart is very heavy, there is no comfort for it except from the mouth of Christ by the Holy Spirit. You may hear the sweetest discourse, you may read the most precious chapters of Scripture and yet your grief may not be relieved, even in the least degree! But when the Lord Jesus Christ undertakes to speak to you. When the great Father opens His mouth. When the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, applies the Truth of God to your heart, then are you filled with joy!

I do not know what particular state you may be in, but this prayer of little Samuel can be turned all sorts of ways. Are you doubtful about your interest in Christ? A great many people make fun of that verse—

"'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?"

If they ever find themselves where some of us have been, they will not do so any more! I believe it is a shallow experience that makes people always confident of what they are and where they are, for there are times of terrible trouble that make even the most confident child of God hardly know whether he is on his head or on his heels! It is the mariner who has done business on great waters who, in times of unusual stress and storm, reels to and fro and staggers like a drunken man—and is at his wits' end. At such a time, if Jesus whispers that I am His, then the question is answered once and for all—and the soul has received a token which it waves in the face of Satan so that he disappears—and the soul goes on its way rejoicing!

Do pray this prayer—"Speak, Lord." If *you* will not, it shall always be *my* prayer. I would seek the Presence of my God and cry, "As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God! When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say to me, Where is your God?" But when my heart can answer, "Here He is! He is with me," then does my soul begin to sing at once—

"My God, the spring of all my joys,
The life of my delights,
The glory of my brightest days,
And comfort of my nights."

Use the prayer of Samuel at this moment, even if you are rejoicing. And if you are beginning to wander, if you are getting heavy and dull and lukewarm, ask the Lord to speak to you so that you may be quickened out of that state, that your declining may be stopped. "Speak, Lord." I have known the time—and so have some of you—when one Word of His has saved us from a grievous fall. A text of Scripture has stopped us when our feet had almost slipped. A precious thought has helped us when we were ready to despair and when we could not tell what to do. One Word out of the Inspired Book applied to the soul by the Holy Spirit has made a plain path before us and we have been delivered from all our difficulties! I commend to you, then, very earnestly, the personal prayer of the soul desiring—"Speak, Lord."

II. Now, secondly, let us think of THE LORD SPEAKING.

Suppose that the Lord does speak to us? Just think for a minute what it is. First, it is a high honor. Oh, to have a Word from God! There cannot be any honor that comes from man that can, for a moment, be compared with having an audience with God, familiar conversation with the Infinite, sitting down at the feet of Eternal Love and listening to the voice of Infallible Wisdom! The peers of the realm are not so honored when they see their Queen as you are when you see your God and He speaks with you. To be permitted to speak with Him is a delight, but to hear Him speak with us is Heaven begun below!

And while it is so great an honor, we are bound to remember that it is a very solemn responsibility. If any man here can say, "The Lord once spoke with me," my Brother, you are under perpetual bonds of obligation to Him! Jesus Christ spoke to Saul of Tarsus out of Heaven and from that hour Paul felt himself to be the Lord's, a consecrated man, to live and die for Him who had spoken to him. "Speak, Lord," and when You do speak, help us to feel the condescension of Your love and yield ourselves up wholly to You because You have spoken to us.

"Oh!" says one, "if God were to speak to me, I am sure it would make a change in me of a very wonderful kind." It would, my Friend. It would convert you. It would turn you right around and start you in quite a new direction. Someone said to me, concerning Paul, that he had "a twist" at that time when he was going to Damascus and everybody afterwards asked, "Is that Saul of Tarsus, the philosopher, the clever young Rabbi, the learned pupil of Gamaliel? Why, there he is, talking plainly and simply to those poor people and trying to bring them to Christ, the very Christ whom he used to hate! What has made such a change in him?" "Oh!" they said, "he has had a strange twist! Something has happened to him which has quite altered him." Oh that the Lord would make something of the same kind happen to everyone here to whom it has not yet happened! This is the mainspring of a holy life, "God has spoken to me and I cannot live as I used to live." This is the spur of an impetuous zeal, "Jesus Christ has spoken to me and I must run with diligence upon His errands." This, I believe, comes like fire-flakes upon the spirit and sets the whole nature on a blaze. To hear God speak, to have His voice go through and through the soul involves a great responsibility, yet he who truly feels it will never wish to shirk it.

To hear God speak to us will bring to us many a hazy memory. I appeal to those who have heard that Voice before. do you not remember, dear Friends, many places where the Lord spoke to you? You have forgotten many of the sermons which you have heard, but there is one sermon you have never forgotten—perhaps there are a dozen that you can recall if you think a little. Why do you remember them? Why, because you were in great trouble and you went into the House of Prayer and the sermon seemed made on purpose for you! You said to the person who sat with you, "I am glad that I was here, for I am sure that from the opening sentence to the close, it was all for me." Or else you were getting into a very dull and stupid state and you went to the House of God and there was a sermon which cut you to the very quick and woke you up. You never could go back to where you were before God spoke to you. No, we can

never forget these voices—sweet yet strong—which thrill our very soul, which wind not through the ear and so waste half their strength, but come directly to the heart! And in the heart enshrine themselves! Oh, yes, if God has spoken to you, your heart will dance at the memory of the many times in which He has done so!

I think I must also say that it is *a probable mercy* that God will speak to you. I know that if you are a father, it is not improbable that you will speak to your child. And our Heavenly Father will speak to His children. And the Lord Jesus Christ, who is married to us, surely will not be a silent Husband, but will be willing to speak to us and to reveal His heart to us. Only pray just now, "Speak, Lord! Speak, Lord!" and He will speak. I feel encouraged to expect that He who died for me, will speak to me. He who did not hesitate to reveal Himself in human flesh, bearing our infirmities and sorrows, surely will not hide Himself from His own flesh! He will not be here among us according to His promise, "Lo, I am with you always," and yet never speak to us at all! Oh, no! He waits to be gracious! Therefore, let not our prayers be restrained, but let us cry, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears."

"But how does the Lord speak?" someone asks. That is a very important question. I know that He has many ways of speaking to the hearts of His people. We do not expect to hear *audible* words. It is not by sense that we live—not even by the sense of hearing—but by *faith*. We believe and so we apprehend God.

God often speaks to His children *through His works.* Are there not days when the mountains and the hills break forth before us into singing and the trees of the field clap their hands because God is speaking by them? Do you not lift up your eyes to the heavens at night and watch the stars and seem to hear God speaking to you in the solemn silence? That man who never hears God speak through His works is, I think, hardly in a healthy state of mind. Why, the very beauty of spring with its promise, the fullness of summer, the ripeness of autumn and even the chilly blasts of winter are all vocal if we have but ears to hear what they say!

God also speaks to His children very loudly by *His Providence.* Is there no voice in affliction? Has pain no tongue? Has the bed of languishing no eloquence? The Lord speaks to us, sometimes, by bereavement—when one after another has been taken away, God has spoken to us. The deaths of others are for our spiritual life—sharp medicine for our soul's health. God has spoken to many a mother by the dear babe she has had to lay in the grave. And many a man has, for the first time, listened to God's voice when he has heard the passing bell that spoke of the departure of one dearer to him than life itself. God speaks to us, if we will but hear, in all the arrangements of Providence both pleasant and painful. Whether He caresses or chastises, there is a voice in all that He does. Oh, that we were not so deaf!

But the Lord speaks to us chiefly *through His Word.* Oh, what converse God has with His people when they are quietly reading their Bibles! There, in your still room, as you have been reading a chapter, have you not felt as if God spoke those words straight to your heart then and there? Has not Christ Himself said to you, while you have been reading

His Word, "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me"? The text does not seem to be like an old letter in a book, rather is it like a fresh speech, newly spoken from the mouth of the Lord to you. It has been so, dear Friends, has it not?

Then there is His Word as it is preached. It is delightful to notice how God speaks to the heart while the sermon is being heard—yes, and when the sermon is being read. I am almost, every day, made to sing inwardly as I hear of those to whom I have been the messenger of God. And my Lord has many messengers and He is speaking by them all. There was one man, who had lived a life of drunkenness and impurity, and had even shed human blood with his bowie knife or his revolver, yet he found the Savior and became a new man! And when he died, he charged one who was with him to tell me that my sermon had brought him to Christ! *"I* shall never tell him on earth," he said, "but I shall tell the Lord Jesus Christ about him when I get to Heaven." It was by a sermon, read far away in the backwoods, that this great sinner was brought to Christ! But it is not only in the backwoods that the Lord blesses the preached Word, it is here, it is everywhere where Christ is proclaimed! If we preach the Gospel, God gives a voice to it and speaks through it. There is a kind of incarnation of the Spirit of God in every true preacher—God speaks through him. Oh, that men had but ears to hear! But, alas, alas, too often they hear as if it were of no importance! And the Lord has to say to His servant as He said to Ezekiel, "Lo, you are unto them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear your words, but they do them not." Oh, that each one of our hearers always came up to the sanctuary with this prayer in his heart, and on his lips, "Speak, Lord, by Your servant; speak right down into my soul."

But the Lord has a way of sometimes speaking to the heart *by His Spirit*—I think not usually apart from His Word—but yet there are feelings and emotions, tenderness and trembling, joys and delights which we cannot quite link with any special portion of Scripture laid home to the heart, but which seem to steal upon us unawares by the direct operation of the Spirit of God upon the heart. You who know the Lord must sometimes have felt a strange delight which had no earthly origin. You have, perhaps, awakened in the morning with it, and it has remained with you. A little while after, you have had some severe trial, and you realize that the Lord had spoken to you to strengthen you to bear the affliction! At other times you have felt great tenderness about some one individual and you have felt constrained to pray, and perhaps to go for some miles to speak a word to that individual. And it turned out that God meant to save that person through you and He did! I think we are not half as mindful as we ought to be of the secret working of the Holy Spirit upon the mind.

There are certain fanatics who get delirious and dream that they are prophets, and I know not what. But we just put them to the side. This is a very different thing from being guided by the Spirit of God in all the actions of life so as to obey the will of the Lord, sometimes, in cases where we might not have known it to be His will, or might have omitted it.

Whenever you feel moved to do anything that is good, do it! Do it even without being moved, because it is your duty, for, "to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin." But, above all, when there comes a gracious influence on the conscience—a gentle reminder to the heart—quickly and speedily do as the Spirit prompts, taking note within your heart that the Lord has laid this particular burden upon you and you must not cast it from you.

I would like to imitate one dear man of God with whom I sometimes commune. On one occasion he seemed to feel in his soul that he must go to a little port in France to deliver the Lord's message. And as the boat went in, a person on the deck spoke to him and he said, "You are the one to whom I was sent." Within a month that godly man was in Russia, seeking the souls of others of whom he knew nothing! But God had guided him and they were brought to the Savior's feet. I know him as one who, I believe, lives so near to God that the Lord speaks to him in other ways than He does to the most of men, for all Christians are not, alike, favored in this respect. One may be a child of God, like Eli, and yet so live that God will not speak with Him. And, on the other hand, one may be a child like Samuel—obedient, beautiful in character and watchful to know God's will, praying, "Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears"—and then God will speak to you. It is not to all that He speaks, but He would speak to all if they were ready to learn what He had to say.

III. Now I must close with just a few words upon the last part of my subject, which is THE SOUL HEARING. We have had the soul desiring and the Lord speaking—now for the soul hearing. "Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears."

And, first, I think we have, here, an argument. "Lord, do speak, for I do hear." "There are none so deaf as those that will not hear," so I fear that some people are very deaf, indeed. But, oh, when you feel, "Only let the Lord speak, I will hear; only let Him come to me and I will set the door wide open for Him to enter, glad if He, my gracious God, will come and be a sojourner with me"—He will come, He will speak to you! It is a good argument and you may use it if you can. God help you to do so!

Yet it appears to be an *inference* as well as an argument, for it seems to run like this, "Lord, if You speak, of course Your servant hears." Shall God speak and His servant not hear? God forbid! Strangers and sojourners may not listen, but His servant will. "Speak, Lord; for if You will but speak, I must hear. There is such a force about Your voice, such wisdom about what You say, that hear You I must and will." It is an argument from God speaking, but it is also an inference from God speaking.

"Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears," seems also to contain *a promise* within it, namely, that if the Lord will but speak, we will hear. I am afraid that sometimes we really do not listen to God. Suppose that we pray the Lord to speak to us and when we have done praying we go away and engage in worldly conversation? This is surely not acting consistently. I remember being asked to see a person and I thought that he wanted to learn something from me. But when I saw him for three-quarters of an hour, he spoke the whole time, and afterwards he told a friend that I was a most delightful person to converse with! When I was

told that, I said, "Oh, yes, that was because I did not interrupt the man! He was wound up and I let him run down."

But conversation means two people talking, does it not? It cannot be a conversation if I do all the talking, or if my friend does it all. So, in conversing with God, there must be, as we say, turn and turn about. You speak with God and then sit still—and let God speak with you. And, if He does not at once speak to your heart, open His Book and read a few verses and let Him speak to you that way. Some people cannot pray when they wish to do so. I remember George Muller sweetly saying, "When you come to your time for devotion, if you cannot pray, do not try. If you cannot speak with God, do not try. Let God speak with you. Open your Bible and read a passage." Sometimes, when you meet a friend, you cannot begin a conversation. Well then, let your friend begin it. Then you can reply to him and the conversation will go on merrily enough. So, if you cannot speak to God, let God speak to you.

It is also true communion with the Lord, sometimes, just to sit still, look up and say nothing. But just, "in solemn silence of the mind," find your Heaven and your God. "Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears. I have prayed to You, I have told You my grief and now I am just sitting still to hear if You have anything to say to me. I am all ears and all heart. If You will command me, I will obey. If You will comfort me, I will believe. If You will reprove me, I will meekly bow my head. If You will give me the assurance of Your love, my heart shall dance at every sound of Your voice. Only speak, Lord; for Your servant hears."

I have finished my discourse, but I do wish that some poor sinner here would say, before he goes away, "Lord, speak to me! Speak to my soul. Let this be the last night of my spiritual death and the birth-night of my spiritual life." As for you who love the Lord, I am sure that you will pray this prayer and that you will keep on praying, "Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears." And then what blessed conversations there will be between you and your Father in Heaven! The Lord bless you all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON!
1 SAMUEL 3

Verse 1. *And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli.* Samuel was but a child, yet he was a faithful servant of God up to the light he had received. The grown-up sons of Eli were rebelling against God, but "the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord." It is a great aggravation of sin for ungodly men to persist in it when even little children rebuke them by their careful walk and conversation. It made the sin of Eli's sons all the worse because "the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli"

1. *And the Word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.* God spoke with very few and His speech to them was private. "There was no open vision." What was spoken was very rich and rare, but there was little of it. The Lord, in anger at the sin of Eli's sons, took away the spirit of prophecy from the land.

2. *And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see.* He was a good old man, but he was almost worn out and he had been unfaithful to God in not keeping his family right. He must have found some comfort in having such a sweet and dear companion and servant as little Samuel was.

3-5. *And before the lamp of God went out in the Temple of the Lord, where the Ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; that the LORD called Samuel and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for you called me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.* Servants and children are to be attentive and obedient to the calls they hear, but masters must also be gentle, kind and considerate to them. Eli did not call the child a fool, or speak harshly to him. He knew that Samuel had a good intention and even if he had been mistaken and no one had called him, yet it was a good thing on the part of the child to act as if he had been spoken to. And Eli quietly and gently said, "I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down."

6. *And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for you did call me.* He felt sure of it, confident that he had not been mistaken.

6, 7. *And he answered, I called not, my son, lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord.* There was the beginning of the work of Grace in his heart. He was well-intentioned, but, as yet, God had not revealed Himself to him. "Samuel did not yet know the Lord"

7, 8. *Neither was the Word of the Lord yet revealed unto him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time.* We do not blame Samuel, for he was but a child, and spiritual understanding had not yet fully come to him. But what shall I say of some to whom God has spoken for years till their hair is gray—and yet they have not understood the voice of the Lord even to this hour? I pray God that He may call them yet again! The Lord did not disdain to call Samuel four times, for when He means effectually to call, if one call is not sufficient, He will call again and again and again! "The Lord called Samuel again the third time."

8, 9. *And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for you did call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if He calls you, that you shall say, Speak, LORD; for Your servant hears. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.* It was a chastisement to Eli that God did not speak directly to *him*, but sent him a message by another. And it must have been very humiliating to the aged man of God that God should select a little child to be His messenger to him. Yet, as Eli had not been faithful, it was great mercy on God's part to speak to him at all! And, no doubt the old man did not resent the fact that God, instead of speaking to one of his sons, or to himself, spoke by this little child. Eli loved Samuel and, finding that the Lord intended to use this child, he did not grow jealous and angry and begin to dampen the child's spirit—he gave him wise directions how to act in case God should speak to him again.

10. *And the Lord came, and stood.*—From which we learn that there was some kind of appearance to Samuel such as that which was mani-

fested to others. Some spiritual Being was before him, though he could not make out the form thereof—"Jehovah came, and stood."

10. *And called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel.* This time the child's name was spoken twice, as though God would say to him, "I have called you by your name—you are Mine! It was no doubt to make a deeper impression upon the child's mind that his name was twice called by the Lord.

10. *Then Samuel answered, Speak; for Your servant hears.* You observe that he did not say, "Lord." Perhaps he hardly dared to take that sacred name upon his lips. He was impressed with such solemn awe at the name of God that he said, "Speak; for Your servant hears." I wish that some Christian men of my acquaintance would leave out the Lord's name a little in their prayers, for we may take the name of the Lord in vain even in our supplications! When the heathen are addressing their gods, they are accustomed to repeat their names over and over again. "O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear us!" Or, as the Hindu say when they cry, "Ram! Ram! Ram! Ram!" repeating the name of their god. But as for us, when we think of the infinitely-glorious One, we dare not needlessly repeat His name.

11-13. *And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of everyone that hears it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house. When I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows.* What a striking expression—"the iniquity which he knows." There is a good deal of iniquity about us which we do *not* know—that is a sin of ignorance. But deep down in his heart Eli knew that he had been afraid to speak to his sons about their sins and that when he had spoken, it had been in such lenient terms that they made light of them. Possibly he had never chastened them when they were young, and he had not spoken to them sharply when they were older. Remember that he was a judge—he was a High Priest and he ought not to have allowed his sons to remain priests at all if they were behaving themselves filthily at the door of the Tabernacle. He ought to have dealt with them as he would have dealt with anybody else, but he did not. So God said, "I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows."

13. *Because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.* A man said to me, one day, "I never laid my hand upon my children," and I answered, "Then I think it is very likely that God will lay His hand upon you." "Oh," he said, "I have not even spoken sharply to them." "Then," I replied, "it is highly probable that God will speak very sharply to you, for it is not God's will that parents should leave their children unrestrained in their sin."

14, 15. *And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever. And Samuel lay until the morning.* I wonder whether he went to sleep? I should think not. After such visitation and revelation, it is a marvel that the child could lie still! One wonders that he did not go at once to Eli, but

then the message was so heavy that he could not be in a hurry to deliver it. "And Samuel lay until the morning."

15. *And opened the doors of the House of the Lord.* Dear child! There are some of us who, if God had spoken to us as He had spoken to Samuel, would feel a deal too big to go and open doors any more! If God were to come and speak to some who are poor, they would run away from their trade. If God were to speak to some who are young, they would give themselves mighty Sirs! But Samuel meekly accepted the high honor God had conferred upon him and when he rose in the morning, he went about his usual duties. "He opened the doors of the house of the Lord."

15. *And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision.* The old man must have felt that it was nothing very pleasant. Still, he wanted to know the Lord's messages. I hope he was in such a frame of mind that he could say, "Lord, show me the worst of my case! Let me know all Your mind about it and let me not go on with my eyes bandaged in ignorance of Your will concerning me."

16-18. *Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I. And he said, What is the thing that the LORD has said unto you? I pray you hide it not from me! God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the things that He said to you. And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him.* Samuel was obeying the Divine command which had not, then, been given—"He that has My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully."

18. *And Eli said, It is the LORD: let Him do what seems Him good.* This was a grand speech of old Eli. Terrible as it might be, he bowed his head to the Divine sentence and acknowledged that it was just.

19-21. *And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of His Words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a Prophet of the Lord. And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh; for the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the Word of the LORD.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—711, 766, 192. (PART I)

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

DAVID'S FIVE-STRINGED HARP
NO. 2527

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 25, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 27, 1884.

"I said unto the LORD, You are my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord. O God, the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle. I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted and the right of the poor. Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name: the upright shall dwell in Your Presence.
Psalm 140:6, 7, 12, 13.

This Psalm was written by David when he was sorely vexed by many adversaries. These adversaries were bent upon his destruction—they could not bear that the son of Jesse should be favored of God and that he should come to the throne—so they set their wits to work to invent all manner of slanders against him. They misconstrued his actions, they misrepresented his motives. They spat the very venom of asps from their mouths against him and, at the same time, they said to one another, "If we can lead him to do wrong. If we can, somehow or other, entrap him, either in his speech, or in his private character, or in his public actions, then we shall have a weapon wherewith we can smite him." The ungodly are fully aware that slander is, after all, a very dangerous weapon to handle and, like the Australian boomerang, it is very apt to come back to the man who throws it. Stones, hurled into the air, often fall upon the head of the thrower, and slander often recoils upon those who utter it. So, if they can but get a *truthful* accusation against a man of God, then they are exceedingly glad. Slander is like shooting at a man with only powder, or with very small shot that can sting, but cannot kill. But, oh, if they can discover some questionable action of the man, or some decided wrongdoing, then they can load their rifles with bullets and have something deadly to fire at the righteous!

David was exceedingly troubled by all this malice on the part of his enemies. He was a man who would have liked to go through the world at peace with everybody. Even when Saul tried to hunt him to the death, you remember that he would not lift his hand against his adversary even when he might have slain him. When, at night, he stood looking at his sleeping foe, and Abishai said to him, "God has delivered your enemy into your hands this day: now, therefore, let me smite him, I pray you, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time." David answered, "Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?" And when David and his men were in the sides of the great cave at Engedi, Saul

came in to sleep awhile and he was, again, in David's power, but David did not touch him, save only that he cut off a piece of the skirt of the king's robe that he might show him, afterwards, how completely he was in his servant's hands. It is peculiarly trying to a man who is thus patient and long-suffering to be incessantly compassed about with false accusations and manifold temptations. David said of his adversaries, "They compassed me about; they compassed me about like bees," stinging him here, and stinging him there, and stinging him wherever they could!

I want you to notice how this man of God acted in this trying time. He betook himself to his knees—he began to pray, "Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man." And again, in the next Psalm, he said, "Lord, I cry unto You: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto You." He found his remedy for all the stings of falsehood in drawing near to the living God! He was a wise man, thus, to bathe his wounds in that bath which alone could take the venom out of them, by a prayerfully drawing near to the Most High. And he mingled great faith with his prayer. When trying to expound this Psalm, I was much struck with the positive way in which David speaks all through it. Notice that sixth verse—"I said unto the Lord, You are my God." That is a grand way to talk! And then, further on, in the 12th verse—"I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted." He has no question about the matter, no hesitation. He does not say, "I hope He will," but, "I know He will, I am confident of it." And that makes him say, in the last verse, "Surely"—he felt so certain about it that he could say, "Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name."

It is a blessed thing when faith rises as tribulations increase. A little faith may do for a skirmish with the enemy, but you need the full assurance of faith for a pitched battle. When the waters are up to the ankles, a little faith may enable you to stand. But when you get to "waters to swim in," then you need, in childlike confidence, to cast yourself entirely upon the stream of Divine Love, or else, assuredly, you will sink. May God be pleased to increase the faith of all of us who believe in Jesus! If we are tempted and tried very sorely, may the Great High Priest, whom we cannot see, but who always sees us and foresees every danger to which we are exposed, pray for us till He can say to each one of us, as He did to Peter, "Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." For, if faith keeps her proper place and prayer does her duty, there will be a way for the child of God to escape from every trial.

There are five things in my text to which I especially want to draw the attention of any who are in sore trouble—and particularly those who are in trouble from enemies who are seeking to ruin them. That which occupied and satisfied David's mind may wisely occupy and satisfy ours when we are in a similar condition to his. Flowers from which this bee has sucked some honey are the kind of flowers for us to light upon, with the expectation that in them we shall find honey, too! The first thing I see here is, *possession asserted.* "I said unto the Lord, You are my God." The second is, *a petition presented.* "Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord." The third is, *preservation experienced.* "O God the Lord, the

strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle." The fourth is, *protection expected.* "I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor." The last is, *praise predicted.* "Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name: the upright shall dwell in Your Presence." I can only speak very briefly upon each head.

I. The first is very precious. I pray that every child of God may realize and experience it. It is POSSESSION ASSERTED. "I said unto the Lord, You are my God."

What was *the possession?* It was the Lord Himself! "I said unto the LORD, You are my God." The word, "LORD," here, means Jehovah. You see that it is in capital letters and wherever our translators print the word, "LORD" thus, they mean Jehovah. "I said unto Jehovah, the only living and true God, You are my God." This is a wonderful speech for David to make—"'You are my God,' in opposition to the gods of the heathen. They may worship Baal and Ashtaroth, but, 'You are my God.' I count other gods to be idols, the works of men's hands, and I despise them. All other confidences, all other grounds of trust are to me but as broken cisterns that can hold no water. 'I said unto Jehovah, the only living God, You are my God,' in opposition to every other who is called God."

"'I said unto Jehovah, You are my God.' I have taken You unto myself as much as if no other man ever trusted You. I feel that I could stand alone and acknowledge You to be the God of the whole earth. I said to my heart, 'All that God is, is henceforth mine.' He has given Himself to me in the Covenant wherein He said, 'I will be their God.' And He is as much mine as if He belonged to nobody else. Yes, as fully, as completely and as entirely mine, if I am a Believer in Him, as if I were His only child, His only chosen, His only redeemed one." Oh, but this is a wonderful thing, to put the lines of possession round the Infinite, to lay the grasp of faith upon the Incomprehensible, and to say, "Jehovah, You are my God"! Your possessions, dear Friends, are very large. "Why do you say that?" asks one—"my garments are wearing out and I am sure I do not know how I shall ever renew them. My cupboard is very bare and my wallet is empty." My dear Brother in Christ, you are a very rich man, after all, for all these treasures that may be eaten up with moth, or cankered and corrupted, what are they? But if God is your God, all things are yours, for all things are in God and the God who has given Himself to us cannot deny us anything! No, He has already, by that very act, given everything to us! So I pray that every child of God may know that he has this possession and be able to say without any hesitancy, "O Jehovah, You are my God."

Observe in the text, not only mention made of the possession, but of *the claim to it.* "I said unto Jehovah, You are my God." David exhibited his title deeds. He did not say to himself, "That possession is mine, but I will leave it unrecognized and unclaimed," but he declared his right to it—"I said unto Jehovah, You are my God." Oh, if the children of God would sometimes be silent instead of speaking, they would be wise! But if, on the other hand, they would sometimes speak instead of remaining

silent, they might be equally wise! Have *you,* dear Friend, ever *said* to the Lord, *"You* are my God." Have you said it? "Well, I have *hoped* it," says one. Oh, but I want you to get much beyond that, till, with full assurance, helped by the Holy Spirit, you can say, "It is so! My faith has grasped my God and I have dared to say it, say it at the Mercy Seat, say it when I stood at the foot of the Cross—and I expect to say it, before long, when I stand before Jehovah's Throne above, 'You are my God!' I put in my claim. I dare not do otherwise. I could not let You go without claiming You as my own. O Lord, You have been my dwelling place in all generations. I have said unto You, You are my God."

Notice also where this claim was made, in whose Presence, and who was *the attesting Witness* to it—"I said unto Jehovah, You are my God." It is a very easy thing to say to the minister, "The Lord is my God," or to say it to some Christian friend by way of profession. But it may not be true. It is a very solemn thing to be able to say *to Jehovah*, "You are my God." True Believers have dialogs with their God! They are accustomed to speak with the Most High. They may say some good things to men, but they say their best things to God—"I said unto Jehovah, You are my God." Can you stand, at this moment, in the dreadful Presence of the Eternal? Can you realize to yourself that He sees and hears you, that He is all around you, that He is in you? Can you think of His infinite holiness and His inflexible justice and yet say to Him, "You are my God; You are a consuming fire, but You are my God"? Even our God, the God of those who believe, is a consuming fire, yet we call Him ours. It is a grand thing, in time of trouble, in time of slander, in time of temptation, if you can just turn your back on it all and say, "I look to God, and I say, 'O Jehovah, You are my God. I say it even in Your Presence.'" If you can truly say this, it will spread a delightful calm over your spirit! It will encase you as in an armor of proof! It will make your bleeding wounds to be stanched and your broken heart to rejoice, if you can say it!

And, once more, it seems to me to be a grand point in this text to note *the occasion chosen* by David to say, "You are my God." It was in the time of his trouble that he repeated to himself the fact that he had made this declaration. "'I said unto Jehovah, You are my God.' Men said that I had a devil, but I said, 'You are my God.' They said I was a castaway, but I said, 'You are my God.' They said I was without a friend, but I said unto Jehovah, 'You are my God.' They said of me everything they could think of that was bad and they would have said worse things if they could have thought of them. And after they had done their worst and said all they could say, I said unto Jehovah, 'You are my God.'"

I cannot say that I care much for a conversation which consists all of, "he said and I said," and, "says he and says I," and so on. But for once it is good for a man to tell us what he said! Sometimes, in the court, a judge stops a witness and says, "I do not want to know what you said, and what the other man said! I want to know what you *saw*." But in this case, we do not wish to stop the good man. We wish him to go on and tell us more of what he said when he was in the very midst of his trouble. "'I said unto Jehovah, You are my God,' and my enemies may say what they like after that. Now, open your mouths, let your venom come forth—you

who are like adders and asps, sting as sharply as you may, you can do me no harm, for, 'I said unto Jehovah, You are my God.'"

That is the first thing I see in the text—possession asserted.

II. The next thing I see is, A PETITION PRESENTED.

It ran in this fashion—"Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord," from which I gather that *his prayers were frequent.* He puts the word in the plural. "Hear the voice of my *supplications."* He did not, in those days of trouble, pray once, and have done with praying, but he prayed again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again! When you have double trouble, take care that you have double prayer. When men speak worst against you, then speak most with your God. Multiply your supplications as God multiplies your tribulations. "Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord." Importunate prayers will prevail.

Next, I gather that *David's prayers were full of meaning.* "Hear the *voice* of my supplications." There are some people's prayers that are dumb prayers. They offer just so many words and yet there is no voice in them. It is a grand thing to have a voiceful prayer. We cannot always tell what is the "voice" of a man's prayer, especially when that prayer is full of moans, tears, sobs and sighs, but God hears a peculiar "voice" in every true supplication. If there were a houseful of children and they were all to cry, yet a mother would distinguish her baby's supplication from all the other cries. And when she went to the child, she would find out what the little one wanted. You and I would not know, perhaps, but she does. "Poor darling," she says, and she puts herself into such sympathy and union with her baby that she soon discovers the child's needs. What the baby cannot express, the mother can hear and discern. And when you cannot pray as you would, God can hear the voice of your supplications just as if you had said what you wanted to say. He takes the meaning out of our hearts, for our thoughts are like words to God. Remember that to speak into a man's ear, you must make a sound, otherwise he cannot distinguish your voice, but in God's ear there need be no sound whatever, for He can hear the voice of your tears, the voice of your silent supplication—

"To Him there's music in a groan,
And beauty in a tear."

Is it not a blessed thing that God understands the meaning of our prayers? "Hear the voice of my supplications."

We also learn that David's prayers were *meant for God.* "I said unto Jehovah, You are my God. Hear the voice of my supplications, *O Jehovah."* Some men's prayers are meant for themselves—just to quiet their consciences. Other men's prayers are meant for their friends, that they may see what pious people they are. But the true suppliant's prayer is meant for God! When he addresses the envelope that contains his supplications, he addresses it to the God of Heaven, for the prayer is meant for Him.

And, once more, David's prayers were of such a kind that *he could not rest unless he had the Lord's attention.* This was his great cry, "Hear the voice of my supplications, O Jehovah." He could not bear to hear his own voice unless God heard that voice. I urge every troubled child of God to

go straight to his own God and cry unto Him. You thought of going down the street and calling on Mrs. So-and-So, and telling her your sorrow. Yes, very well, you may do so if you like. But it is a shorter road to go to God with your trouble. Straightforward makes the best runner and there is no door that has such an inviting knocker, and that opens so easily, as the door of God! Go to the Lord with your trouble. Ask Him to hear you, for assuredly He will.

So much, then, on that second point. We have spoken of possession asserted and a petition presented.

III. Now, very briefly, David, to encourage himself, mentions PRESERVATION EXPERIENCED. "O God, the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle." As much as to say, "You have done this for me before. Will You not do the same again? As You have begun with me, do not leave off with me till You have taken me to the country where there are no more battles—and where my head shall be covered with a crown of glory—and need not be covered with a helmet to ward off the enemy's sword."

You remember that when David went out to meet Goliath, two warriors came towards him, for Goliath came out with his armor-bearer—"the man that bore the shield went before him." Poor little David! He had no armor-bearer, had he? Saul had offered him armor that he might wear in the fight, but it did not fit him. He had never tried and proved such a protection as that, so he laid it aside. But was David without armor? No! The Hebrew of our text runs, "You have covered my head in the day of armor." That is to say, *God had been David's Armor-Bearer.* The Lord had borne a shield before him. Instead of the harness in which warriors put their confidence, God had covered David with a coat of mail through which no sword of the enemy could possibly cut its way! Has it not been so with us in days past? Have we not had our heads covered when God held His shield above us? Have we not been guarded from all hurt by the Providence and by the Grace of the Most High? I know it is so! Well, then, the God who delivered us out of the jaws of the lion and the claws of the bear will deliver us from the uncircumcised Philistine! And the God that in our youth taught our hands to war and our fingers to fight, so that the bow of steel was broken by our arms, will not leave us and forsake us now that we have grown older and feebler—but even to the end will He preserve and protect us! Therefore, let us be of good cheer and let our past experience encourage us to trust in the Lord.

"You have covered my head in the day of battle," said David; that is, *God had guarded his most vital part.* "Lord, I have a cut or two here and there. I have scars upon my right arm and my foot has been injured, but, 'You have covered my head.' The adversaries could not give me such a blow as would lay bare my brain and spill my soul upon the field, for 'You have covered my head.'" Flesh wounds there may be, and deep bleeding gashes that cause pain and sickness of heart, but the essential part has been guarded and we may rest contented that it shall be protected unto the end!

Moreover, David adds here that *God had been the strength of his salvation.* The power that had saved him had been God's power and it is so

with all of us who have been brought into the way of life. Some of us came to Christ long ago, yet still we sing—

"Many days have passed since then,
Many dangers I have seen.
Yet have been upheld till now—
Who could hold me up but You?"

Now, if the Lord had meant to destroy us, would He have done so much for us as He has done? I feel, when I think of some of my present troubles, very much like Admiral Drake who had sailed round the world and, here and there fought the Spaniards on the great ocean. And when he came back to the Thames, it blew a gale and his ship was likely to be driven ashore. He said, "No, no, no! We have not gone round the world and now come home to be drowned in a ditch!" So let us say, "No, no, no! We have not experienced so much of the goodness of God to be drowned in a paltry ditch like this." So let us still rejoice in the God who has preserved us until now and who will preserve us until the day of Jesus Christ!

IV. But I must hasten on to notice the fourth thing in our text, that is, PROTECTION EXPECTED. "I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted and the right of the poor."

If a man is oppressed, if he is slandered, if he is evilly spoken of, let him say to himself, "God will see to this. *He is the Judge of all the earth* and shall not He do right?" Do not meddle with the case yourself. Leave it in the Lord's hands. Our proverb says, "If you want a thing done well, do it yourself," but, if it is anything which has to do with your own character, let me tell you that this is the worst proverb that ever was invented! If you want a blot that you have made, or that somebody else has made, multiplied into two, try and rub it out with your finger while it is wet. But if you are wise, you will leave it alone. All the dirt that ever comes on a man's coat will brush off when it is dry. I do believe that, sometimes, holy characters shine all the brighter because they have been tarnished for a while by the filth cast upon them by ungodly men. If men cast mud at you, leave it alone. "But," says one, "this slander affects my character." Oh, yes, I know, but who are you that your character should not be assailed? "But it is the only one I have," you say. Well, that is quite right—and mind that you do not get another and a worse one—by making a fool of yourself! Leave it alone and be wise! The God who gave you the Grace to have a good character will take care of what He has given you and you need not be afraid, for God is a righteous Judge.

Moreover, beside that, *God is a compassionate Friend.* And when He sees any of His dear saints very poor and afflicted, do you not think that when they cannot take care of themselves, He will take care of them? David thought so, for he said, "I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor." The rich man can take care of his own rights, but the poor man cannot—so God will take care that the poor man shall not lose his rights, or if he does, God will avenge him of his adversary. Trust your cause with God! You can not have a better Advocate or a better Helper. Put not forth your hand unto unrighteousness, neither speak you on your own behalf. You will be wise if you will do as your Master did, "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again."

Who was led as a lamb to the slaughter and, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened He not His mouth.

V. Now, lastly, here is PRAISE PREDICTED. "Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name."

They are down in the dumps today. They are troubled and burdened, despised and made to cry. But, says David, "Surely they shall give thanks unto Your name." *Praise is assured by gratitude.* There shall come a day when their gratitude shall be so great that they shall be obliged to give thanks unto God on account of all that He has done for them. "Surely" they shall. God will so astound them by His delivering mercy that they shall be compelled to speak up and to speak out—and give thanks unto the name of the Lord.

Yes, and they shall do more than that, for they shall not only express their thanks, but *they shall praise God by their holy confidence. "*The upright shall dwell in Your Presence." They shall be drawn nearer to God and be peaceful, happy, quiet and at ease. This is a beautiful and comforting promise—"The upright shall dwell in Your Presence." All the world is up in arms against them and there is a great uproar. And what do they say? "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life: and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." One of the grandest ways of praising God is not by singing Psalms and hymns—that is a very sweet way of praising Him—but a grander way is by being quite calm in the time of trouble, quite happy in the hour of distress, just dwelling with God and finding all your grief relieved in His blessed Presence. How really and truly a child praises his father when he just bears anything from him! "It must be right," he says, "for my father does it." And I believe when a child of God says, "It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him," he is praising God more than he could ever do with the cornet or the high-sounding cymbals! Let us try to do that.

And, once more, we can equally praise God by *abiding in fellowship with Him.* "The upright shall sit in Your Presence." So it may be rendered. How can I explain it? If you could look within the veil up yonder, in the Glory Land, you would see a Lamb in the midst of the Throne of God, and round about Him all those redeemed by blood who have entered into their happiness. And you down here, in your time of trouble, can just go to your Father's table and take your seat as one of His children, or go to your dear Savior's feet and take your place with Mary—and so you will be praising the Lord Jesus Christ in the most effectual manner! I know that your temptation will be to be buzzing about the kitchen with Martha, fretting and worrying over what has happened and what has not happened—but all that the Lord Jesus Christ will say to you will be, "Martha, Martha, Martha, Martha, you are cumbered about many things." I know men who ought to be called Martha, for they are as much cumbered as ever the women are and just as ready to fret and to worry, so that the Savior might say to them, "You are cumbered about many things, but if you want to praise Me, come and sit here. Come and learn of Me, for that is the good part which shall not be taken away from you. Come and listen to Me. Give up your whole heart to drinking in My Word and I will bless you. You come and mind My business and I will stay and

mind your business. Come and try Me, and I will give you proof that trusting in Me is the safest and best way of living in this world."

All this I have spoken to the people of God. I would you were all such, but, if you are not, I pray the Lord to bring you into the bonds of the Covenant. It is a very blessed thing to come to Christ and, when you do come to Him, all these precious things are yours! Trust in what Christ has done for sinners. Trust in the promise of the faithful God to save all who believe in Jesus! And when you have trusted, you shall never be confounded, sinner though you are. The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 140 and 141.

Psalm 140. *To the Chief Musician, a Psalm of David.* Very likely this Psalm was written by David while he was being hunted about by Saul, and while all manner of falsehoods were being spoken against him. He therefore comforts himself in his God. He writes this Psalm and he means to have it sung, and sung well, so he dedicates it "to the chief Musician." There are some parts of our life which are so crowded with urgent necessity and so full of Divine mercy that we feel that if we ever get through them, we will make a song about our deliverance and dedicate that song unto God through "the chief Musician."

Verse 1. *Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man.* He is wicked at heart and violent in his temper. Whenever we meet with such an adversary, we have good reason to cry to God, "Deliver me: preserve me." Yet, if we must have enemies, we prefer that they should be bad men. We do not wish to have a child of God against us. If we must have an antagonist, we would much rather that he should be one who is "evil" and "violent."

2. *Which imagine mischief in their hearts continually are they gathered together for war.* It goes hard with a peace-loving man—a man of quiet spirit—when he is beset by those whose very hearts are set on mischief and who cannot meet one another without conspiring to prepare for some fresh form of battle.

3. *They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips. Selah.* Before a serpent strikes any object, its tongue is in quick motion. If you ever see a cobra when he is angry, you will notice that his tongue darts to and fro, as if impatient to sting. And the Psalmist, here, writing of the tongue of the ungodly, remarks how quickly it moves. They seem to have sharpened it—to have prepared it for all manner of mischief. "Adders' poison"—the poison of the deadliest known serpent in the East—"is under their lips." Perhaps you think that this is a very dreadful description of some remarkably bad man. So it is, but remember that when Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, wishes to describe us all, both Jews and Gentiles, he quotes this very passage and says, *"The* poison of asps is under their lips." There is still poison in our mouths unless Grace has taken it away. We, too, shall soon be speaking

evil and talking slanderously, if the Grace of God does not keep our tongues and our lips.

4, 5. *Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man who has planned to overthrow my goings. The proud have hid a snare for me.* "They have put it where I cannot see it. I do not know where it is, nor what it is, but I know that they want to lead me into such sin that they can afterwards turn round upon me and accuse me for it. 'The proud have hid a snare for me.'"

5. *And cords; they have spread a net by the wayside.* "Close to where I am walking, so that if I go even an inch out of the way, I shall be caught in it. They seem to be tempting me in my usual course of life. 'They have spread a net by the wayside.'"

5. *They have set traps for me. Selah.* As men try to ensnare poor birds in all kinds of traps, so the ungodly sometimes seek the destruction of the righteous by setting many snares for them.

6. *I said unto the LORD, You are my God.* Ah, that was the right thing to do—to leave the ungodly and their traps and go straight to God. "I said unto the Lord, You are my God."

6, 7. *Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord. O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle.* "When the darts flew thick and fast, and when the battleaxe came down with a mighty crash, 'You have covered my head in the day of battle.'" This Psalm reminds me of that passage in the song of Deborah and Barak—"O my Soul, you have trodden down strength." What wonders we also have been enabled to do by the upholding and preserving Grace of God!

8. *Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: further not their wicked devices lest they exalt themselves. Selah.* If it seemed that God's Providence was helping them against the righteous, they would be too proud to be borne with—they would lift up their heads on high, and say, "See how God is with us, how He permits us to have our way?"

9. *As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them.* This may be read as a prophecy in the future tense—"The mischief of their own lips shall cover them."

10. *Let burning coals fall upon them.* Or, "Burning coals shall fall upon them."

10. *Let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again.* The Psalmist doubtless had before his mind's eye the picture of Sodom, where burning coals fell on the guilty cities, and where men stumbled into the fire and when they tried to escape, fell into the deep slime pits and perished. And, truly, it is but just that, if men lie and slander—and try to tempt the righteous to their destruction—they should fall into the pits that they have themselves dug.

11. *Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth.* Neither shall he be! The man who is glib of tongue and who uses that facility of speech for the destruction of the characters of godly men shall never be established.

11. *Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him.* His own dogs shall eat him. He was a huntsman against the righteous and, behold, the

evil of his own mouth shall turn upon him to devour him! "Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him."

12. *I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor.* We may always leave such matters with the Lord. God is the poor man's Executor and the proud man's Executioner! He will take care of the oppressed and such as are down-trodden.

13. *Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name; the upright shall dwell in Your Presence.* Now let us read the next Psalm, which is to much the same effect.

Psalm 141:1. *LORD, I cry unto You: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto You.* You see how a child of God prays when he is in trouble. David says, "I cry unto You," and then the second time, "I cry unto You." And he cried *for* God as well as *to* Him. "Make haste unto me." The very best thing you can do, when you cannot help yourself, is to cry unto God, for He will help you.

2. *Let my prayer be set forth before You as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.* David was probably far away from the Tabernacle and he could not join in presenting the morning or the evening sacrifice there. But he prayed God to let his prayer be such a sacrifice—"Let it be sweet as the perfume of the smoking spices of the morning; let it be as acceptable as the burning lamb of eventide."

3. *Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.* Our mouth is a door and it needs a watchman, and there is no watchman who can keep it except God, Himself. "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

4. *Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.* That last petition is a very proper one. We are neither to think the thoughts of the wicked, nor to practice their ways, nor to enjoy their pleasures. "Let me not eat of their dainties." There are certain amusements which are fraught with sin—"Let me not eat of their dainties." There are some erroneous doctrines which are very pleasant to the taste of those who believe them—"Let me not eat of their dainties." There are some sins that seem to have a peculiarly sweet flavor and so are very attractive to men—"Let me not eat of their dainties."

5. *Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness.* You see, dear Friends, David cries out against slander. He cannot bear that wicked men should lie against his character, but he says, "I do not want to be left alone where I am in the wrong. I do not wish to be flattered. 'Let the righteous smite me.' He is the man who ought to do it. When I have done wrong, it is his duty to correct me, and I wish him to do it. 'Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness.'"

5. *And let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head.* Some people cannot bear to be spoken to about a fault. They feel as if the reprover had broken their head, directly, and they are as savage as a bear with a sore head! But the child of God is not so—he looks upon the rebuke of a good man as being like healing, sweet-smelling oil—and he prizes it. Depend upon it, the man who will tell you your faults is your best friend! It may not be a pleasant thing for him to

do it and he knows that he is running the risk of losing your friendship—but he is a true and sincere friend—therefore thank him for his reproof and learn how you may improve by what he tells you.

5. *For yet my prayer, also, shall be in their calamities.* I will try to repay the righteous for their rebukes by praying for them when they are in trouble. I will say to my God, "These good men tried to keep me right and they smote me when I did wrong. Now, Lord, they are in trouble, I pray You to help them and bring them out of it."

6. *When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet.* Wicked men often will not hear the Gospel, but when they get into trouble, they will. When their judges are overthrown in stony places, then they begin to be willing to hear what good men have to say. A bitter world makes a sweet word and when Providence frowns upon us, it often happens that we love the Gospel all the more, and smile upon its messengers, for their words are sweet.

7. *Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth.* "We are like men ready to be put into their graves, or the cause that we advocate seems so totally dead that we seem to be like dry bones that are flung out of a grave."

7. *As when one cuts and cleaves wood upon the earth.* "We feel as if we were like chips out of a tree that has been cut down."

8. *But my eyes are on You, O God the Lord: in You is my trust.* "I may be cut to pieces, I may be chopped up, I may seem to be made into a bundle of firewood, but, Lord, my eyes are on You. 'O God the Lord: in You is my trust.'"

8. *Leave not my soul destitute.* "If I have You, I am still rich. Even if I lie at the grave's mouth, I may still live. But if You are gone from me, then am I destitute, indeed."

9, 10. *Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the traps of the workers of iniquity. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I escape.* Amen! So let it be!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—632, 626, 627.

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

EATING THE SACRIFICE
NO. 2528

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 1, 1897.
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"And they shall eat those things wherewith the atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them: but a stranger shall not eat thereof, because they are holy."
Exodus 29:33.

On the last two Sabbath mornings I have spoken concerning the sacrifices under the Law. Our first sermon was, "*Putting the Hand upon the Head of the Sacrifice,*" and the next was, "*Slaying the Sacrifice*" (*Nos. 1771 and 1772—Volume 30—read/download the entire sermon for free at* http://www.spurgeongems.org). Now we are to make an advance and to speak about the eating of the sacrifice, for in certain cases the offerer ate a portion of that which had been presented to God.

It has been said by some people who are very particular in drawing nice distinctions, that there was no eating of a sacrifice in which there was any connection with sin. I beg to differ from that opinion and I have showed you that every sacrifice had something to do with sin, since no sacrifice would have been needed if the man bringing it had not been a sinner. And here, in this case, I might have selected many texts to teach the Truth of God I want to bring out just now, but I have especially chosen this one because it says, "They shall eat those things wherewith the atonement was made." You all know that a covering is only needed for those who are naked, or who have something that requires to be hidden. So, the atonement, or the covering, is evidently intended for the guilty—and has something to do with sin—yet of the things wherewith the atonement was made, Aaron's sons were to eat, so that there is to be an eating, a joyous reception into ourselves even of those things which have a connection with the putting away of sin!

The first thing that an offerer did with his victim when he brought it was to appropriate it to himself by laying his hands upon it. So, when a sinner comes to Christ, his first act is to lay his hands upon Christ, that Christ may be shown to belong to the sinner and that the sinner's guilt may be transferred to Christ and borne by Him as the sinner's Substitute. In later life we are continually to look to Christ and, by faith, to lay our hands upon Him. But we are to advance to a yet more lively and more intensely spiritual way of appropriating Him to ourselves. This is indicated in the text by *eating*—

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

but, after you have begun to live, the substance of that life comes through *feeding* upon the Sacrifice! The first appropriation—the laying on of the hands—is an outward act. But the later appropriation—feeding

upon the Sacrifice, taking it into yourself—is altogether an inward matter. You who are not yet saved have not, at present, anything to do with this eating of the Sacrifice. Your first business is to look to Jesus—not so much spiritually to enjoy Him as, by faith, to look to Him as outside of you, to be regarded by the eye of faith while you, a poor guilty sinner, simply look to Him and find salvation in Him. It is afterwards, when you shall have made some advance in the Divine Life, when you shall have clearly seen the Victim sacrificed and His blood making an Atonement for your sins, that you shall come and feed upon Jesus Christ.

At the time of the Passover, the Jew must first take the lamb, kill it and sprinkle the blood on the lintel and the two side posts of his house. And after that he must go inside and, when the door is shut, feed upon that lamb whose blood is sprinkled outside. He must eat the Passover supper that he may be refreshed before starting on his journey through the wilderness. Let not this distinction be forgotten—the eating of the sacrifice is not intended to *give life*, for no dead man can eat—but to *sustain the life* which is there already. A believing look at Christ makes you live, but *spiritual life* must be fed and sustained—and the feeding of that life is explained by our Savior in the words I read to you just now—"Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed"—*spiritual* meat and *spiritual* drink to support the spiritual life which God has given. Hence it was ordained, even under the Law, that after the atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify the priests, they were to come and sit down and "eat those things wherewith the atonement was made."

I. The first thing about which I have to speak to you at this time is, THE PARTICIPATION—the eating of the sacrifice.

So, first, I will describe it. We are to "eat those things wherewith the Atonement was made," to participate in Christ, to take Him into ourselves. The act of eating is a very common but a very expressive method of setting forth participation, for it is entirely personal. Nobody can eat for you, or drink for you. It is personally for yourself that you partake of bread, and the bread goes into yourself, to build up yourself, to be assimilated by yourself into yourself so as to become part of yourself. And, dear Friend, the Lord Jesus Christ must thus be received into your heart and soul by yourself, for yourself and must remain within yourself, you exercising upon Him continually a blessed act of faith by which you have communion and fellowship with Him. This can't be done by any sponsor, or proxy, or through any means—it must be done personal[y, directly and distinctly by yourself. God help you to receive Christ into yourself! That point, surely, is plain enough. As a man himself receives food into himself, to become part of himself, so must you and I receive the Lord Jesus *into* ourselves, *for* ourselves, to be interwoven *with* ourselves, so that we two shall be one!

This participation is not only personal, but it is distinctly *inward*. There is no receiving Christ by any exercise of the flesh, by anything that we can do externally. It is within that we are to receive Christ, with our heart, with our spirit. We are not to regard Him only as yonder on the

Cross, but as formed in us the hope of glory, as coming into us to sit as King upon His Throne and to reign within us—for it is into our innermost nature that we are to receive the blessed Truth of God concerning Christ and His Atonement.

And it is an active reception, too. A man can receive some things into himself passively. Oil may penetrate into his flesh. Certain drugs may be injected beneath the skin and so may permeate the blood, but eating is an active exercise, a thing done by a man, not in his sleep, but with the full intent that he may receive into himself that which he eats. So must you receive the Lord Jesus Christ, feeding upon Him willingly, actively taking Him into yourself with the full consent and power of your whole being. You know, also, that eating arises from a sense of need and it leads to a sense of satisfaction. The most of people eat because they are hungry, though I suppose there are some who eat simply because the time has come, whether they need food or not. I have heard that the best time for a poor man to have his dinner is when he can get it, and that the best time for a rich man to have his dinner is when he wants it. And I think there is something in the saying. In this *spiritual* feeding, if you will feed on Christ when you can get Him, you may begin at once. What is needed in most cases is an appetite, but when a man has an appetite for Christ, when he says, "I must have pardon, for I am a sinner. I must have a renewed heart, for I have an evil one. I must have spiritual life, for I am in a state of spiritual death," then he has the appetite which only Christ can satisfy! Then, when he receives Christ into his heart, there follows a sense of satisfaction as you have sometimes seen in the case of a person who has enjoyed a good meal. He needs no more. He lies down and is perfectly content.

Oh, but what a satisfaction Christ brings to the soul that feeds upon Him! When you have fed on Him, dear Friends, how full you have become—not to repletion, for the more you receive of Him the more He will enlarge your capacity—but you have received Him to the fullness of satisfaction! Do you recall that Psalm where David says, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips"? Oh, yes, and it is so with us when we receive Christ into our hearts! Then are we filled to the full and this is the kind of participation which is meant in our text—we are to "eat those things wherewith the Atonement was made"—we are to receive Christ personally, inwardly, actively, because of our soul's hunger and that our feeding upon Him may lead to an intense satisfaction with Him! Do you want another Savior, you who have received Christ Jesus into your souls? I know that you do not! Is there something, after all, that you desire to add to the blessed Lord and His Divine work? I know that there is not, for, "you are complete in Him"—perfectly satisfied with Christ Jesus, filled up to the brim with all spiritual blessings!

Thus I have tried to describe this participation. Now I want you to *practice it.* Notice that the text says, "They shall eat those things wherewith the Atonement was made." Among, "those things," there was flesh, there was bread in the basket and so forth. And they were to eat of all those things. I gather from this injunction that you and I must endeavor to feed upon all that makes up the Atonement and all that is connected

with the Atonement. For instance, let us feed upon the Father's love that gave the Lord Jesus Christ to bleed and die. Then let us feed on the fact of the Divine Person of the Lord Jesus. Oh, what a blessed loaf that is! What is the use of a Savior to me if He is not Divine? I am sure that nothing short of Deity can ever save such a soul as mine from the sin in which it is found! But Christ is "very God of very God," so I feed upon that glorious Truth of God! Will not you do the same, dear Friends? Then feed upon the fact of His perfect Humanity, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, born of a human mother, as certainly Man as we are. Oh, there is many a satisfying meal in the blessed Doctrine of the true and indisputable Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Then, when you have fed upon Christ's Deity and Humanity, feed upon the willingness with which He came to save us. Long before He was born into this world, His delights were with the sons of men and He looked forward with joy to the time of His appearing. "Lo I come," He said, "in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God." In the fullness of time He came, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills, that He might save His people! It is no unwilling Savior who has come to save you and me, Beloved. Feed on that sweet Truth of God. Think of the love that did lie at the back of it all, the love He had to His Church and people, which moved Him to lay aside all His Glory and take upon Himself all our shame—to surrender the ineffable splendor of His Throne—to be nailed up to the shameful Cross! O Brothers and Sisters, there is a great feast for the soul in the love of Christ! This is "butter in a lordly dish." There was never such wine, even at a king's marriage, as that which Christ Himself made, and we can truly say to Him, "You have kept the best wine until now."

Yes, but I believe that there is food for us at every stage of the Redeemer's passion. There are sweet fruits to be gathered even in dark Gethsemane. There are precious clusters of the vine to be found at Gabbatha, the pavement where the cruel scourges made the sacred drops roll. What food there is for our souls upon Calvary! Every item of our Lord's death is sacred! We would not omit any of the details of His suffering, for some strike one mind and some strike another, but could we go through the whole history of our Savior, from the agony in Gethsemane till He said, "It is finished," we should find all the way full of food for our souls! Where are there such pastures as those that grow on Calvary? Sharon, you are altogether outdone! O plains that fed the flocks of old, you are barren compared with this little hill whereon the Savior poured out His soul unto death! Try, dear Christian Friends, to feed on all these things! I cannot keep you to do it, now, but at such times as you can get an hour, or even a few minutes, say to yourself, "This is all spiritual food for me. I am to feed on 'those things wherewith the Atonement was made.'"

Before I pass to the second division, I want to tell you one more thing about this participation which, I think, enables it, and lifts it altogether out of the commonplace, namely, that this feeding of the priests—or, if you turn to the peace-offering, the feeding of the offerer, himself—upon the sacrifice was in fellowship with God. When the sacrifice was offered, a part of it was burnt on the altar. That was God's portion. The altar rep-

resented God and the Lord received the portion that was consumed by the fire. In the text before us, we see that the priest was also to take his share. It was a part of the same sacrifice, so both God and the priest fed upon it! You and I, Beloved, are to feed *with* God on Christ! That is a blessed sentence in the parable of the prodigal son where the father said, "Let us eat and be merry." The father eats, and the family eats with him—"Let us eat, and be merry." Oh, it is indeed joyful for us to remember that the Father finds satisfaction in the work and merit, the life and death of the Only-Begotten! God is well pleased with Jesus, for He has magnified the Law and made it honorable. And that which satisfies the heart of God is passed on to satisfy you and me. Oh, to think of our being entertained in such a fashion as this!

You remember that it is said of the elders who went up with Moses and Aaron into the mountain, that, "they saw God, and did eat and drink." And surely we are as favored as they were, for now in Christ Jesus we behold the reconciled God and we eat and drink with Him. And while the Father smiles because the work of Atonement is finished, we sit down and we rejoice, too. Even we poor weeping sinners wipe our tears away and sing—

"Blessed be the Father, and His love,
To whose celestial source we owe
Rivers of endless joy above,
And rills of comfort here below."

If God is content, so are we! If the Judge of all the earth says, "It is enough," we also say, "It is enough." Our conscience echoes to the verdict of the Eternal. Christ has finished the transgression and made an end of sins, and brought in everlasting righteousness and, therefore, we enjoy the sweetest imaginable rest in Him! The Father's delight is in Him and so is ours. Oh, who among us who knows the Lord Jesus, will stand back for a moment from this blessed eating with God? "They shall eat those things wherewith the Atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them."

II. This brings me to my second point which is an advance upon the former one, namely, THE OFFICIAL CHARACTER OF THIS PARTICIPATION. In this particular form, the participation was for the priests only.

Now, mark this. The child of God, when he is first converted, does not know much about being a priest. He does not know much about doing anything for Christ. I heard of a good Scottish woman whose style of speech I cannot imitate, but I like the sense of it. Someone said to her, "How long have you been a servant of the Lord?" She said, "No, nay, but He has been a servant to me, for does He not say, ' I am among you as He that serves"? "Ah," replied the other, "that is true. But, still, you have served the Lord." "Yes," she answered, "but it is such poor work I have ever done that I do not like to think of having done anything at all for Him. And I would rather talk of how long He has been doing something for me, than how long I have been doing anything for Him." That is quite true! Yet, inasmuch as the Lord Jesus Christ died for us, we reckon that we all died and that He died for us that we, henceforth, should live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him and, by His Grace, so we do. If the Lord

has really blessed us with His love, we have begun to be priests, and we have begun to serve Him.

Now the priest, because he is a priest, is the man who must take care that he feeds upon the Sacrifice. But how are we priests? I am *not,* now, talking about *ministers*, I am talking about all of you who love the Lord. Christ has made all of us who believe in Him to be kings and priests unto God—there is no priesthood in the world that is of God save the High Priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ and, next to that, the priesthood which is common to all Believers. And the idea of there being any priesthood on earth above and beyond the priesthood of all Believers is a false one, and there is no Scripture, whatever, to vindicate it, to justify it, or even to apologize for it—it is one of the lies of the Roman Catholic church! All Believers are priests, but they do not all fully recognize that great Truth of God. It is a pity they do not realize that glorious fact and so join in the Apostle John's doxology, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Being priests, they are, first of all, to *offer themselves.* What says the Apostle? "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Now, you will never do this unless you feed upon Christ! I shall never be a sacrifice to God unless my soul is nourished upon the true and living Sacrifice, Christ Jesus, my Lord! To attempt sanctification apart from justification is to attempt an impossibility! And to endeavor to lead a holy life apart from the work of Christ is an idle dream! You priests who offer yourselves unto God must take care that it is all done through Christ who is in you.

Next, as priests, we are *to intercede for others.* A priest was chosen to offer prayer for others and every Christian ought to pray for those who are round about him. But you will never be men of prayer unless you feed on Christ, I am sure of that. If Christ is not in your heart, intercessory prayer will not be in your mouths. You will never be true pleaders with God for men unless you are, yourselves, true feeders upon the atoning Sacrifice of Christ.

A true priest is, next, *to be a teacher.* The Prophet Micah said, "The priest's lips should keep knowledge," and so should it be with all Christians. They are to teach others. But you cannot teach others what you do not know yourselves! And unless you are, first, partakers of the fruits, you will never be able to sow the seed. You must feed upon Christ in your inmost soul or else you will never speak of Him with any power to others.

Priests, again, were chosen from among men *to have compassion on the ignorant* and on such as were out of the way. That is your duty, too, as Christians—to look after the weak ones and the wandering ones—and to have compassion upon them. But, unless you live by faith upon the compassionate Savior, you will never keep up the life of compassion in your own soul! If Christ is not in you, neither will you be in the spirit of Christ, full of love to such as need your help. But, coming fresh from communion with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, your words

of consolation will sweetly drop into afflicted hearts and will comfort them. You will have the tongue of an instructed one and be able to speak seasonable and sweet words to such as are weary. Take care, then, that you feed upon Christ.

I believe, also, that a Christian man is to act as a priest for a dumb world, and *to express the worship of creation.* It is he who is to chant creation's hymn. It is his voice that must lift up the hallelujahs of the universe. The world lacks a tongue. Yon sea, with all its rolling billows, yet speaks not a word articulately. And yonder stars, with all their brilliance, cannot tell out the glory of God in human language, or, indeed, in any language at all! "There is no speech, nor language; their voice is not heard." Nor can the sweet flowers, nor even the birds, in actual language tell of Him who made them and express their gratitude to Him. But you and I have a tongue, which is the glory of our frame, and with that tongue we are to open our mouths for the dumb and speak the praises of God for all creation! Take care that you do it! Before you lies the world, like a great organ, all ready to sound forth the sweetest music, but it cannot play itself. Those little hands of yours, if they are instinct with heavenly life, are to be laid among the keys and you are to fetch forth strains of mighty hallelujahs unto Him who has made all things and sustains all things by the power of His hands! Feed on Christ and you will be able to do this, for He speaks to reveal God and He becomes the tongue of men unto the Father! Live on Him and you shall learn the art of speaking for creation unto the Creator.

III. Now I have done when I have very solemnly noticed, in the third place, THE ABSOLUTE PROHIBITION. "They shall eat those things wherewith the Atonement was made. . . but"—"but a stranger shall not eat thereof, because they are holy."

Who was "a stranger" in such a case as this? Everybody was a stranger, in the matter of the priests, but such as belonged to the priests. And strangers might not partake of the sacrifices with the priests. The prohibition is clearly given in the 22nd Chapter of Leviticus, at the 10th verse—"There shall no stranger eat of the holy thing: a sojourner of the priest"—that is, a mere guest—"or an hired servant, shall not eat of the holy thing." Listen. You who only come into the House of God just to look on, you who do not belong to the family, but are only sojourners—welcome as sojourners—but you may not eat of the Holy Thing! You cannot enjoy Christ, you cannot feed upon the precious Truth connected with Him, for you are only a sojourner. I am very sorry, on the first Sabbath night in the month, and I think that some of you must feel very sorry and sad, too. There is to be the Communion, the Lord's Supper. You have been hearing the sermon, but you have to go away from the table, or else to take your place among the spectators. You are only sojourners—you do not belong to the family and dare not profess that you do! You are only a sojourner, or a stranger.

And it was the same in the case of a hired servant. He might not eat of the holy thing, and he who only follows Christ for what he can get out of Him—he who works for Christ with the idea of *meriting* salvation, hoping that he may earn enough to save himself by his works—is only like a priest's hired servant. He says, "I do my best and I believe that I shall go

to Heaven." Yes, just so. You are a hired servant, even though Heaven seems to be the wage you are expecting, but you may not eat of the Holy Thing.

Now notice what is written in Leviticus 22:11. "But if the priest buys any soul with his money, he shall eat of it." Is not that a blessing? *If the Lord Jesus Christ has bought you with His precious blood,* and you by faith recognize yourself as not your own, but bought with a price—then you may eat of the Sacrifice. "If the priest buys any soul with his money"—it may be a very strange person, somebody for whom you and I would not give two pence—but if the Great High Priest has bought any soul with His money, "he shall eat of it."

"And he that is born in his house, shall eat of his meat." There is the Doctrine of Regeneration, as the former part of the verse spoke of Redemption. If you have been born again, and are no more in the house of Satan, but in the house of the Great High Priest, you may come and eat of this spiritual meat! If you have the blood-mark, having been bought by Christ, and if you have the life-mark, having been quickened by the Spirit, and born into the family of Christ, then come along with you! Though least and weakest of them all, come and welcome!

Listen to this next verse—"If the priest's daughter also is married to a stranger, she may not eat of an offering of the holy things." She is the priest's daughter, mark you. Nobody denies that—and shall not the child partake with the father? No, not if she is married to a stranger. She now bears her husband's characteristics. She has given herself up to him. She is no longer her father's, she belongs to her husband. Oh, is there anybody here who once made a profession of religion, but who has gone aside? Have you got married to the world? Have you got married to amusements and Sabbath-breaking? Have you got married right away from the Priest, your Father—right away from the Church of Christ—right away from the people of God? Then you cannot eat of the Holy Thing!

Yet listen to one other verse. "But if the priest's daughter is a widow, or divorced, and has no child, and is returned unto her father's house, as in her youth, she shall eat of her father's meat; but there shall no stranger eat thereof." Perhaps there is someone here who says, "I am a widow." I do not mean that your natural husband is dead, but that the *world* has become dead to you! You went and married into the world for wealth and you have lost it. You are poor now, riches are dead to you. You used to be such a fine woman, but now your face has lost its comeliness, your beauty is dead. Everybody used to admire your talents, but you have not any talent, now, and they all give you the cold shoulder. Ah, well, I am not sorry that the world has cast you out and cast you off! Perhaps the men of the world have said concerning you, "We will have no more to do with him." You are divorced, you see.

Long ago, I was divorced from the world. I got a bill of divorcement pretty quickly when I began to preach the Gospel in London! If it were worth while, I could publish some of the cruel and false things that men said. According to them, I was the biggest charlatan and the greatest hypocrite and deceiver who ever lived. That was my bill of divorcement—the world said, "We have done with you"—and I replied, "I have done with

you." And so we parted. There were not many words on my part, but there were a great many on theirs. Well, if it is so with you. If you feel that the world has done with you and you have done with the world, and you are willing to come back to your Father's house, just as in the days of your youth, come along with you! Come in and eat of His dainties, feed upon Christ on earth by faith, and then go up and feed on Him even to the fullest in Glory everlasting!

But you must get away from your stranger husband, for if you cleave to him, you will have to be counted with that which your heart lusts after. What you love shall label you. Where your delight is, where your treasure is, there your heart is—and there your portion is! But if the Lord will help you to escape right away from the clutches of error and sin, then it shall be with you as it was with the priest's daughter—"If she is returned unto her father's house, as in her youth, she shall eat of her father's meat."

"But there shall no stranger eat thereof." If you will not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you are a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel—and there is no way of your being made near but by the blood of the Cross. If you believe in Him, you are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." But if you are not bought with His money, or born in His house, then you must remain strangers—and there is no blessing for you, no comfort for you!

The other day, one who had been attending a religious service and mocking and jesting at everything sacred, said, when he was talked to about it, "Oh, but I am a Christian! Jesus died for me." It was a lie! He had neither part nor lot in the matter, or else he could not have acted profanely as he did! And there are others who talk as he did, but I tell you, Sirs, whatever you say, this is what God says, "A stranger shall not eat thereof." If you have not been born again, you cannot feed upon Christ! But, oh, if you will look to Him who died for the sinner, then you shall feed upon Him who lives for the saint! God Bless you in both these respects, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 6:41-71.

Verse 41. *The Jews then murmured at Him*—That is, at our blessed Lord. "The Jews then murmured at Him."

41, 42. *Because He said, I am the bread which came down from Heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it, then, that He says, I came down from Heaven?* There are always some who complain that the Gospel is "too commonplace, too well-known." They already know all that is to be known about it, just as these people knew the mother and father of our Lord Jesus. How could He, who was the son of the carpenter, have come down from Heaven? But this ought to have commended Him to them that though He was Divine, He became so truly Human and so perfectly took upon Himself our Nature as to be the son of Joseph—one whose father and mother they knew! And ought we not to be glad of a Gospel plain enough for a child to grasp, simple enough for the most ignorant to be

saved by it? Let us not seek after signs and mysteries, but graciously accept the Gospel which the Lord Himself gives us.

43, 44. *Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draws him: and I will raise him up at the last day.* This was high ground for Christ to take. It was as much as to say, "You need not murmur. I did not expect that you would believe in Me. I know that human nature is such that, without a Divine work upon the heart, man cannot come to Me, and will not believe in Me. I am not disappointed, or deceived, when you murmur among yourselves, 'No mall can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draws him.'"

45. *It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me.* Nobody else will come to Christ. There is no real Christian in the world but is of God's making. A Christian is a sacred thing, the Holy Spirit has made him so. It takes as much of God's Omnipotence to make a Believer as to make a world. And only He that created the heavens and the earth can create even as much as a grain of true faith in the heart of man!

46. *Not that any man has seen the Father, save He which is of God, He has seen the Father.* The Divine Son has seen the Father. You and I are to *believe*—we cannot see as yet.

47. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me has everlasting life.* He has it even now in possession—a life that can never die out is in the breast of every man who believes in Christ! Oh, what a joy is this!

48. *I am that bread of life.* Jesus is that bread which feeds the spiritual life and sustains the everlasting life.

49, 50. *Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from Heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.* The bread that feeds the undying life is Christ Jesus, Himself, whom we do spiritually feed upon, and who is the nourishment of our souls.

51. *I am the living bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* Christ—God Incarnate—is the nourishment of faith, the spiritual food of the everlasting life! The *new life* which God puts into us is not natural, so as to be fed upon natural food, like bread and meat. But it is *spiritual* and it must live upon spiritual food. That food is nothing less than Christ Jesus, Himself.

52-56. *The Jews therefore said among themselves, saying, How can this Man give us His flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed. He that eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, dwells in Me, and I in him.* These Jews would not understand Christ when He spoke very plainly. He did not, therefore, retract a single word that He had said, but as the first light had dazzled them—and willingly were they dazzled by it—He turned the lantern full upon their faces and made them blind, for the excessive light of the explana-

tion was too much for them. It was not Christ's intent to save them—He was making the Light of God, itself, to be blindness to them because they had already refused Him. And now the time was come when the heart of these people must be made yet more gross, that they should not see with their eyes, or hear with their ears! May the Lord never give us up to such a fate as that! It is a dreadful thing when the Light of the Gospel becomes the instrument of blinding men, and it still does so. After a certain degree of willful rejection of it, that which would have been a savor of life unto life can be turned into a savor of death unto death by men's closing their hearts against it!

Yet I wonder and am astonished at our Lord and Master's course of proceeding, that here, when the men do not and will not see, He does but speak the Truth of God the more boldly! Let no man think that Jesus was here alluding to the eating of the bread and drinking of the wine in the Lord's Supper! That ordinance was not instituted at that time and there could be no allusion to what did not then exist! It is quite in another sense, in a high spiritual sense, that our mind feeds upon the flesh and blood of Christ. That is to say, the fact that God was made flesh—the fact that Christ died for sin—*these* are the food of our souls, and thereon our faith grows, and our spirit is strengthened.

57, 58. *As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats Me, even he shall live by Me. This is that bread which came down from Heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eats of this bread shall live forever.* This is spiritual feeding upon spiritual Truth.

59-62. *These things said He in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum. Many, therefore, of His disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can bear it? When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured at it, He said unto them, Does this offend you? What and if you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?* Let our Master teach us what He pleases, nothing ought to offend a disciple of Christ! It is ours to sit at His feet and receive all His words without quibbling. But if we do not believe what He tells us upon some elementary points, what should we do if He were to reveal something more to us—and lead us into the higher and deeper doctrines of His Word?

63. *It is the Spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing.* That is to say, it is the *meaning* of Christ's words that gives life, not the words, themselves. And if we stumble at the letter, and begin to ask, "How can we eat the flesh of Christ?" taking that expression *literally*, it will kill us! We need to get into the spirit of what He says, the true spiritual meaning of it, for that is where the life lies.

63, 64. *The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not.* Could that be truly said of any here? "There are some of you that believe not." If so, you know what becomes of unbelievers—you certainly cannot attain the blessings promised to faith. May God grant that, before this day is quite over, there may not be left one among you that believes not!

64-66. *For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him. And He said, Therefore said I unto you,*

that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father. From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. So it seems that a man may be recognized as a disciple of Christ and yet he may go back and walk no more with Him. Oh, that we may be real disciples—disciples indeed! Oh, that we may be part and parcel of Christ, true branches of the true Vine, living members of the living body of Christ!

67. *Then said Jesus unto the twelve.* The choice and pick of all His followers. "Then said Jesus unto the twelve."

67, 68. *Will you, also, go away? Then Simon Peter.* Who was the ready tongue of the Apostles. "Then Simon Peter."

68. *Answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life.* That was a very conclusive way of answering one question by another—"Will you also go away?" "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life." Brother, Sister, if we wandered from Christ, where could we go? And how can we leave Him when He has the Words of eternal life?

69-71. *And we believe and are sure that You are that Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spoke of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray Him, being one of the twelve.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—296, 786, 313.

SPECIAL NOTICE

The August number of *The Sword and the Trowel* contains a full report of the services in connection with the stone-laying at Beulah Baptist Chapel, Bexhill-on-Sea, together with an article by Mrs. C. H. Spurgeon upon the same subject, and reproductions of two photographs taken during the proceedings. There are also the usual items of interest—The Question Oak. The Pastor's Page. Our Own Men and their Work, Indian Incidents and Illustrations. The By-Ways and By-Gones of Life, etc. etc. Dr. McCaig's Conference Paper and an illustrated letter from Pastor J. G. Potter on Famine Relief in India. Extra copies should be ordered at once, price 8d., post free 4d., of Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster, or through any bookseller. [Check with Pilgrim Publications for availability and price of reprints: http://www.pilgrimpublications.com]

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

COMPASSION ON THE IGNORANT
NO. 2529

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 8, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"Who can have compassion on the ignorant,
and on them that are out of the way."
Hebrews 5:2.

THE ignorant have need of compassion. "That the soul is without knowledge, it is not good." Every kind of ignorance, like darkness, is evil, and knowledge, which is light, is, according to its kind, good, or better, or best. For a man to be ignorant of Divine things is a very sorrowful piece of business. To be going into eternity and not to know anything about it—yes, and even to be passing through this life and yet to not know the way everlasting which leads to Glory, but to be stumbling upon the dark mountains of mere thought and vain imagination—this is a very dreadful thing! Ignorance of God, ignorance of the right, ignorance of Christ, ignorance of mercy, ignorance of Heaven—these are things for which men are to be blamed, but for which they are also to be pitied. Wherever we see ignorance about the things of God, let our hearts go forth in tenderness, but let our prayers arise to God in love—and let our efforts be made in true benevolence that the ignorance may be removed, for, if we are men of God like our Great High Priest, it will be true, also, of us that we "have compassion on the ignorant."

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, it becomes every man to have compassion on the ignorant because the ignorant man is still a man! However little he knows, he is still a man, and you and I need not be excessively modest if we put ourselves, also, down among the ignorant, for what if we are better instructed than others? How little do we know, after all! The most intelligent, the most experienced—the man who has dwelt nearest to his Lord—yet how much there remains even for him to know! He knows the love of Christ, but it passes his knowledge. He knows many things, yet he is obliged to confess that here he only knows in part—and it is not till the hereafter that he shall know even as he is not. Therefore, seeing you are a man and, in your measure ignorant, you are to have great compassion upon your fellow man and upon his ignorance.

And inasmuch as the ignorance here meant is the ignorance of sin, which is constantly described in the Old Testament as folly, so that every sinner is declared to be a fool—yet concerning this, you and I may well have compassion because we are sinners, too! If God has made us to differ, yet that difference is all the result of His Grace and, therefore, not to be taken to ourselves as a reason for pride and lifting ourselves up above others. No, a sinner yourself, you should be very tender to all other sinners. Yourself indebted—oh, how deeply—to Infinite Love, you should be

very gentle to others who need that love! What if you are cleansed from the pollution of sin? It was a fountain filled with blood in which you were washed! Therefore, be you anxious that your fellow man should be washed there, too! What if the power of your sin is conquered? It was the Holy Spirit who worked this victory in you! Should you not desire that other captives should be set free, that other rebels should be subdued, that others who are under the domination of sin should be brought under the rule of your Divine Lord? If you are a man, a gracious man, a man of God, a chosen man, a blood-washed man, you should "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way."

But, dear Friends, under the old dispensation, there were some who were chosen of God to take up a peculiar relationship to their fellow men. These were the priests and especially the High Priest—the one man who, alone, of all Israel, might once in the year enter into the Most Holy Place with the blood of the atonement. He who has to deal with men for God must be, above all others, very tender and very patient. It was a most trying experience for Hannah, when she went up with her sorrowful spirit to the house of the Lord, that God's High Priest was not a man of tender and compassionate spirit, for Eli spoke very sharply to the good woman, and well-near broke that heart which God would have to be healed! It is a very sad thing when a man who is ordained of God to speak to men for God, is hard, cold and cruel—as if he were a judge rather than a father, or as if he were a butcher to slay the sheep rather than a shepherd to fetch it back from its wandering!

The Lord Jesus has made all His saints to be priests—we offer no sacrifice of blood—but He has made us kings and priests unto God, and we have to deal with men for God, all of us, I mean, not ministers, alone, but *all of you who are the Lord's own people*! And it ought to be said of all of you who are kings and priests unto God that you "can have compassion on the ignorant." A Christian without compassion seems to me to have missed a very vital part of the Christian character. A hard-hearted Christian—is not that a complete contradiction? Must not our hearts have been broken before we could, ourselves, be penitent? And He who bound them up and healed them, did not harden them with His gentle touch! I reckon that He gave them an additional tenderness by the very act of binding them up with His own dear pierced hands! And we ought to be very gentle—as a nurse with her child, as a mother with her darling—in dealing with the ignorant and those that are out of the way. Our sympathy ought to be always flowing, like a crystal fountain that is never dried up in summer, nor frozen in winter. The Lord has chosen us and called us to this office, that we should "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way," not only because we are men, but because God has made us priests—not only because we are, ourselves, children of God, but because we are now *servants* of God, set on purpose to look after the lost sheep and bring them into the fold.

But, Brothers and Sisters, our text concerns our Lord Jesus Christ. So now let me say that I speak not merely of what ought to *be,* but of what is true of Him. He is a Man, a Brother to every man! He is a Man, the Friend of all mankind. Yes, the friend of His bitterest foe—and He is always tender towards all the sorrows and the griefs of men. Then He is

also a Priest in a sense in which you and I are *not*, a Priest above Aaron and all mere earthly priests, the Great High Priest in whom all the types unite and from whom our priesthood is derived. He, above all others, "can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." It is to that one point that I have to call your attention, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ, as God's ordained High Priest, having compassion upon the ignorant. I pray that the words I speak may help some trembling, clouded spirit, with its eyes blurred by the mist of earth and sin. May there strike out of this starry text a living beam of light for you! He can have compassion on you who mourn your ignorance! May He have that compassion even now—plentifully, practically, permanently, savingly—and may many who, until now, knew Him not, learn to know Him and never to forget Him throughout eternity!

I. So, first let us ask, WHAT IS THIS IGNORANCE here mentioned?

Well, *it is common enough in all ranks of society.* I read, the other day, the opinion of a good man that most preachers give their congregations credit for knowing a great deal more than they do. And I think that it is very likely true, for there are sermons which are preached upon various Truths of the Gospel in which certain other Truths of God, necessary to the understanding of the whole, are not explained because it is taken for granted that they are already known. Yet in any large number of people there must be some who are entirely strangers, even to the most elementary Truths of Revelation. I am sure that it is so! There is, perhaps, nothing more amazing in this century than the ignorance of men about the things of God. It is certain that a knowledge of Scripture does not keep pace with the growth of knowledge of other things and that the understanding with regard to eternal realities is not so instructed as it is with regard to politics, to science and to other matters which are of temporary importance for this present life.

This ignorance is to be found among the poorest of people. They have had very little or no education, but that is of small consequence comparatively. They have forgotten what they learned in the Sunday school. Perhaps they never grasped what they heard preached because they did not understand it. As I heard one say, the other day, "I went to the place of worship near my house, but it was no good to me. There was not a single sentence of the sermon that I understood, for the words were all novel to me." I am afraid that is the case in very many places—the talk of the theological hall is not understood in the cottage—and common phrases which reading people understand at once, are not understood by multitudes of people. But the pity is that there are also thousands of reading people who are totally ignorant of the things of God—some of the wealthiest, some of the best educated, yes, some, even, of those who have been to the university—and some who put the, "D.D.," after their names! "No," you say, "that cannot be!" I say that it is and if you, yourself, know the way of salvation, you have but to talk with some of these people to find that what I say is true! This is a Truth of God that is learned by the teaching of the Holy Spirit—not by the teaching of theological professors!

A man might spend a century under the best ministry, or in the best school that ever existed on earth and yet, at the end of one hundred years, he might not know the things of God, for these Truths must come

as a revelation to each man and God, the Holy Spirit, must teach them to each one, or they will never be learned. This is the standing miracle in the Church of God—and unless we see it continually worked, we have not the clearest evidence that our religion is supernatural and Divine! Every man who really receives it, receives it not because it suits his taste or his palate, but because the Spirit of God sends it home to his heart! Every man who truly knows Christ, knows Him not because with his own faculties he found Him out, but because it pleased God to reveal His Son in him. And, apart from this, there is and must be, to the end of human life, an absence of all real knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. First, "You must be born again." And then, being born again, you must be taught of the Spirit of God. And, if we are not, as the strongest light cannot make a blind man see, and the greatest heat cannot make a dead man warm, so, neither can anything that we *do*, as long as the soul is unrenewed, ever cause it to know God and His Grace aright! It is a common ignorance, then, in all ranks of society.

It is also an ignorance concerning the most important matters, for the men of whom I am now speaking are, first, *ignorant of themselves.* They are ignorant of their own ignorance and, perhaps, there is no ignorance that is so hard to deal with as the utter ignorance of men as to their own ignorance. "What? You call me ignorant?" a man asks. "I know everything! I have read from Genesis to Revelation and I understand it all! I could preach as well as anybody." Yes, but that kind of talk shows that you do *not* know, for he that knows, knows that he does not know—and there is no man less inclined to boast of his knowledge than the man who has a good deal of it! Whenever I find the men of the modern school of thought, as they are continually doing, sneering at the orthodox because we are all uncultured, and so forth, I think to myself, "And if you only had a little culture, you would not sneer so often." It is a mark which will never mislead you, that he who thinks that he knows is a fool! And he who says that he knows more than anybody else and can afford to deal out his sneers liberally to others is a gentleman who, if justice were dealt out to him, would be, himself, sneered at! Those who are strangers to themselves do not know their own ignorance—and that is lamentable ignorance, indeed.

They are also unaware of their own depravity—they do not think that their heart is corrupt, or depraved at all. No man can long know anything of himself without discovering that he has a *bias toward evil*—that if let alone, quite alone, his thoughts go the wrong way! He finds that he needs to school himself to be right, kind and loving, but that he needs no effort to be proud, domineering, and revengeful! He finds that sin is indigenous to the soil of his heart, while everything that is good needs cultivation, watching and tender care. He finds, in fact, that his heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." But the ignorant who are described in our text, do not know that—and do not believe it.

They are also ignorant of the heinousness of their sin. They have never done much amiss, nothing very greatly wrong. They have not been all they ought to have been, but they have been within a shaving of it—and if they have fallen a little short, they can pick up, again, and make up for all deficiencies, by-and-by! They do not feel that there is much amiss

about their characters—in fact, if they have to seek another place and have to give themselves the character they feel that they deserve—it will be a very fine one, indeed! Ah, But this is gross ignorance, for he who knows himself will say, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. And we do all fade as a leaf and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

These ignorant people are also ignorant of their present and eternal danger. They do not suppose that sin puts them into any perilous condition with regard to God. Truly, He is very merciful, but they ignore the fact that He is as *just* as He is merciful, and they put aside all idea of any judgment to come, or of the wrath of God that abides on the wicked. Though these solemn Truths of God are clearly revealed in Scripture, they have left all such old-fashioned notions far behind, for they are "abreast of the times." So they go on and, though often reproved, they harden their necks and persevere in the way which will surely lead them to everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord and the Glory of His power. Surely, this is utter ignorance of the worst kind!

Yet these people vainly imagine that they can turn from sin whenever they like! They have only just to will it and they shall certainly become Christians, if that is necessary, before they die. They do not know their inability, or their weakness—and while they are naked, poor, blind and miserable, they content themselves with believing that they are rich, increased in goods and have need of nothing! May God, in His infinite mercy, save such ignorant persons from the terrible consequences of their folly before it be too late!

While ignorant of themselves, they are equally *ignorant of the way of salvation.* But they hear it, do they not? Yes, they hear it, but they do not understand it. It is to me a very curious thing—often an amazing thing—when I am seeing persons lately converted. I have known those who have heard the Gospel in its simplicity from their childhood and yet, as soon as ever they are awakened to a sense of sin, they try to save themselves by their good works! They know better, yet they turn to that delusive system and, if they get weaned from that, then they think they must be saved by their *feelings*. They have been warned against such a folly thousands of times, yet they run to it! That simple principle, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," is an enigma, a perfect riddle. to any man until he is born again. He thinks he knows all about the Gospel, yet he does not. And though we try, by explanation and illustration, to make it as plain as possible, and put it into easy Saxon words, and say that salvation comes by a simple trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet, as far as they are concerned, we might just as well have spoken it in Hebrew, or in Dutch! They do not comprehend what we mean, but still fumble about after something of their own, instead of looking altogether out of themselves unto Him who is able to save them by what is in Himself—not by what is in them! Ah, dear Friends, these people I am trying to describe are ignorant of the very way of salvation!

And specially sad is it that they are *ignorant of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.* They hear of Him, yet do not know Him. They do not know how loving, how kind and how full of Grace and power He is, but they think of

Him as though He were austere and unwilling to receive them. They are so ignorant of Him that they do not come to Him that they may have life!

They are also *ignorant of the Holy Spirit* and of His power to change the heart, renew the mind and deliver us from the thralldom of sin. They have heard about regeneration—they know a little about the doctrine—but what it is to come savingly under the power of the Holy Spirit, they do not know.

This ignorance is *most ruinous in its consequences* and ought, therefore, to excite the compassion of all good men! Even now it robs the mind of joy and deprives the spirit of the best of blessings—but the *future* consequences will be still more terrible. Alas, this ignorance is often willful! No man is so blind as the man who will not see. No man is so deaf as he who refuses to hear. And there are none so ignorant as those who do not want to learn and will not submit themselves to the teaching of God.

II. Here comes in the mercy that the Lord Jesus Christ can have compassion on the ignorant. So now, very briefly, I want to answer a second question, which is this—WHAT IS THERE IN THIS IGNORANCE WHICH IS SO PROVOKING TO US AND, THEREFORE, DEMANDS COMPASSION?

I reply, first, *its folly.* If you have ever taught children, or if you have ever taught young men who have been very careless and indifferent and, by no means anxious to learn, you have sometimes been provoked even by their ignorance, itself. You have said, "What? Don't you know *that*?" Have you never heard a teacher speak very sharply concerning some point upon which a young man ought to have been well-informed and he has found him a very dolt, and he has said, "What? Not know *that*?" and he has seemed to look at him almost with contempt for not knowing such a simple thing!

Ignorance is also usually accompanied with a great deal of pride. There is nobody who thinks he knows so much as he who knows nothing. He is always sure, positive, certain—he does not need you to tell him anything. In his own conceit, he is wiser than seven men that can render a reason—roll seven clever men of reason together, and you have not as much knowledge as this one poor feel fancies he has! That silly pride is very provoking to the man who is trying to instruct a fool, while the fool thinks that his instructor is the one who lacks wisdom.

And then, with ignorance, there generally goes *prejudice*. A man has imbibed certain ideas and he does not want to know anything contrary to them. He says, in his boorish brogue, "What's the good of it? I don't want to know nothing about it. I knew a man once who did know something about it, and it was no good to him." Well, just what the countryman says about some branch of teaching, the natural man says about the things of God! "I don't want to know. I already know enough. My father and mother always went to such-and-such a place and they said, 'You do your best and Jesus Christ will make up the rest.' And I don't want to know about your Gospel" Now, this foolish and wicked prejudice is a very provoking thing—and you may say to the man—"Why will you not listen and hear for yourself, and let me tell you about it?" "No," he says, "I don't want to know," and you turn away sad and grieved.

There also generally goes with ignorance a great deal of obstinacy. The man will not believe what you tell him. You say to him, "Why, it is as plain as the nose on your face!" "Yes," he says, "but I can't see my nose," and he does not mean to see this particular Truth of God that you are bringing under his notice. You may prove it as plainly as two times two make four, yet, as he never did see it, so he never will see it! This is provoking to anybody who is anxious to give instruction upon matters that are really vital.

Sometimes ignorance is attended with a degree of very gross *unbelief*. When the man is made to know after a certain sense, yet he says that he cannot believe it. I am always grieved when I heard anybody say, "I cannot believe in Christ." It does seem shocking. If you cannot believe in me, I do not at all wonder! You may know something about me that may lead you to distrust what I say. But to say, "I cannot believe in Christ," is a very horrible thing! Did *He* ever lie? Is there anything untrue about Him? Is there anything about our blessed Master that savors of a sham? Surely you can believe in Him—may God give you the spiritual power to believe in Him, now, and to say, "I do believe. I will believe in Christ who died for me. I will come to Him and trust in Him." But that unbelief which goes with ignorance is full of provocation.

This is, I think, the most striking thing of all, men are ignorant through sheer *willfulness*. They will not know any better. How many men fight against knowledge that troubles them! "Oh," says one, "I do not want to go to hear that man again! He touches upon some point that will not let me sleep at nights." I have read a great many accounts of myself that have been far from true, but, the other day, I met with one which greatly pleased me, because it said, "He is a man who stands up on a Sunday and troubles more people's consciences than anybody else does." "Oh," I thought, "that is exactly what I meant to do and what I always want to do—to trouble people's consciences when they ought to be troubled." There are some of you who know that you could not go and drink again if you gave your hearts to God. If you came and learned the way of salvation, you could not be found in that company which now pleases you. Perhaps there is one who has beguiled you into sin, from whom you would have to separate if you were joined to Christ.

And there is many a man who says, "No, no. Not just yet, not just now. I will think of it, by-and-by." And, meanwhile, just behind you stands Death, the skeleton king, stretching out his bony hand and, perhaps, tonight, he will lay it on your shoulder and chill you to a corpse! What day you will be buried is not known, just now, on earth, but it is known above! Oh, that you and I, and all of us might have Grace to wish to know everything that makes for our peace! Especially would I ask you to wish to know the very worst about yourself. Pray God that you may never have anything kept from you, but that you may know that which shall lead you at once to Christ, that you may find salvation through the blood of the Lamb!

III. Now I must conclude by answering a third question—How DOES OUR LORD SHOW HIS COMPASSION TO THE IGNORANT?

He does it, first, by *offering to teach them.* If there is anybody here who desires to be taught, the Lord is willing and waiting to teach you! Is it a

Mary? She may come and sit at Jesus' feet and He will not upbraid her, but He will say that she has chosen the good part. Is it a Zacchaeus? Would you steal into the House of God, as he climbed up into the sycamore tree, that, among the foliage, he might not be seen, but yet might hear? Well, the Lord Jesus Christ is willing to teach you and to bid you make haste and come down, that He may abide in your house and your heart! He keeps a school which is always open and there is no charge for admission. The poorer and the more ignorant you are, the more welcome are you to the school of Christ—and this is how He proves His compassion to the ignorant. An ancient philosopher in Greece put over his door, "He that is ignorant of arithmetic must not enter here." He required some amount of knowledge before he would take a pupil, but the Lord Jesus Christ puts over His door, "He that is simple, let him turn in here. As for him who is void of understanding, let him come and learn of the Great Teacher!*"* Come, then, my poor ignorant Friend, for He will have compassion on you!

And His compassion is shown, next, *by actually receiving all who come to Him.* There is never one who comes to Christ but He takes him in to lodge and tarry with Him till he is instructed in the things of God. Come along with you, for Jesus said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." If you know nothing except that you know that you know nothing, He will instruct you unto eternal life!

Our Lord also shows His gentleness *by teaching us little by little.* If you Christian people look back upon your past history, you will be delighted to note how the Lord let the Light of God in gradually upon you. The blind man, whose eyes are opened, cannot bear the full light of noonday. And the Lord abounds toward us in all wisdom and prudence, teaching us "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little." I sometimes bless God that He does not give to some comers such a sight of sin as they get afterwards. A full sight of sin, my Brothers and Sisters, without a sight of the precious blood of Christ, would drive any man or woman among us mad! But we get a little glimpse of sin and we are appalled by it, and then we get a larger view of the Atonement, and we are comforted.

Perhaps no man has such a knowledge of the heinousness of sin as that man who is just going into Heaven. The Lord reveals our danger to us by degrees—we stand on a dreadful slope where a single slip means eternal destruction! And if the Lord were to let us see where we are, it might cause our destruction. But He *first* lifts us out of it and then lets us see where we used to be—shows us our disease by our remedy—and lets us know, when we are getting well, how near to death's door we once were. Oh, what a compassionate Teacher of the ignorant is the Lord Jesus Christ!

He also shows His compassion by *teaching us the same thing over and over again. "Why,"* said one to a mother, "you teach that child the same thing 20 times." "Yes," she said, "and do you know the reason?" "No," said the other. "Why, it is because 19 times will not do!" Ah, how does the Lord teach us the same thing 20 times over and still we forget it! And then He teaches us again, and again, and again, and again till, at last, we learn it!

Another great proof of His compassion is seen in His *never casting off those He has once taken into His school,* even if they are very dull and slow to learn and, perhaps, after 20 years, do not know much. The Lord had to say to one of His Apostles, "Have I been so long a time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?" But He did not turn Philip out as a dull boy and He will not turn us out! But, having once received us into His school, He will continue to use this means, and that, and the other, and still another, till at last we drink in the eternal Truth of God and it becomes part of ourselves! And He permits us to go where the Truth of God shall be seen in all its brightness and our heart shall be prepared to receive it. This is the substance of all I have said—Christ Jesus has compassion on the ignorant and I do entreat you, if you feel as if you do not understand Divine things, to come to Him to give you an understanding heart that you may receive the Truth of God!

"Oh, but I do not know!" says one. Then come to Him who does know, and say, "What I know not, my Lord, teach You me." "Oh, but I feel so empty!" Just so and you are, therefore, all the fitter to be filled. "Oh, but I am so ignorant!" A sense of ignorance is the doorstep of knowledge! If you have come so far, I bless God that you are on the way to something higher and better. Come to Christ! You know, sometimes, when a boy who is a little dull goes to school, his master may not notice him among so many. And the older boys may slight and despise him—and he feels very miserable. But what if his master, noticing him, shall at once feel great tenderness for him and say, "Come here, child. I must make you the special objective of my labor and care"? That boy will surely get on, I think, and so, if you come into Christ's school, our compassionate Lord will say, "Come here! Come here! I will teach you more than others, I will teach you privately. I will give you lessons in your bed, at nighttime will I instruct you. In your sickness I will talk with you. Because you are so dull in your own esteem, therefore I pity you and will take more care with you than with others."

The promise is, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." Not one of the whole family shall go without an education—and the very dullest shall still be "taught of the Lord." Will you go home, if you have never been instructed by Him, and seek Him in prayer? Ask Him to teach you. If the Gospel seems all a maze and a mist to you, go and say, "Lord, will You explain it to me?" One touch of Christ is better than years of study! You may try for many an hour to see in the dark, and yet see nothing. But if you go to Him who is the Morning Star and the Sun of Righteousness, you shall soon see. God grant that it may be so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 4:14-16; 5.

Hebrews 4:14. *Seeing, then, that we have a Great High Priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.* Why should we let it go? Jesus has triumphed, He has entered into Glory on our behalf—the victory on our account rests with Him! Therefore let us follow Him as closely as we can. May He help us,

just now, if we are in the least dispirited or cast down, to pluck up courage, and press on our way!

15. *For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* How this ought to draw us to the Savior—that He was made like ourselves, that He knows our temptations by a practical experience of them and though He was without sin, yet the same sins which are put before us by Satan were also set before Him!

16. *Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find Grace to help in time of need.* We have a Friend at court! Our Bridegroom is on the Throne of God! He who reigns in Heaven loves us better than we love ourselves! Come, then, why should we hesitate? Why should we delay our approach to His Throne of mercy? What is it that we need at this moment? Let us ask for it. If it is a time of need, then we see clearly from this verse that it is a time when we are permitted and encouraged to pray!

Hebrews 5:1. *For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.* The high priest of old was "taken from among men." Aaron was chosen and then his son; an angel might have been sent to perform Aaron's duty, but it was not so. And, glory be to our blessed Lord and Master, He is "One chosen out of the people," "taken from among men."

2. *Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that He, Himself, is also compassed with infirmity.* Christ was not compassed with *sinful* infirmity, but He was compassed with sorrowful infirmity. His were true infirmities or weaknesses—there was no evil about Him, but still He had the infirmity of misery—and He had it even to a greater extent than we have. The high priest of old was a man like those for whom he stood as a representative. And our Great High Priest is like unto us, though without sin.

3. *And by reason hereof he ought.*—That is, the ordinary high priest, chosen from among men ought.

3. *As for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.* But our Lord had no sins of His own. Do not, therefore, think that He is less sympathetic with us because He had no sins—far from it! Fellowship in sin does not create true sympathy, for sin is a hardening thing. If there are two men who are guilty partners in sin, they never really help each other, they have no true heart of kindness, either of them! When the time of difficulty comes, each man looks to his own interest. The fact that Christ is free from sin is a circumstance which does not diminish the tenderness of His sympathy with us, but rather increases it.

4, 5. *And no man takes this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest but He that said unto Him, You are My Son, today have I begotten You.* The text is quoted from the second Psalm and it proves that Christ did not arrogate to Himself any position before God. He is God's Son, not merely because He calls Himself so, but because the Father says, "You are My Son, today have I begotten You." He took not this honor upon Himself, but He was "called of God, as was Aaron."

6. *As He says also in another place.*—In the 110th Psalm.

6. *You are a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.* He does not assume the office on His own account, but it is laid upon Him. He comes not in as an amateur, but as an authorized Priest of God!

7. *Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared.* This is to prove His infinite sympathy with His people and how He was compassed with infirmity. Christ prayed. How near He comes to you and to me by this praying in an agony, even to a bloody sweat, with strong crying and with weeping! Some of you know what that means, but it did, perhaps, seem to you that Christ could not know how to pray just so. Yet He did. In the days of His flesh, He not only offered up prayer, but "prayers and supplications"—many of them, of different forms and in different shapes—and these were accompanied with "strong crying and tears."

Possibly you have sometimes had a dread of death. So had your Lord—not a sinful fear of it, but that natural and perfectly innocent, yet very terrible dread which comes to a greater or less extent upon every living creature when in expectation of death. Jesus also comes very near to us because He was *not* literally heard and answered. He said, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." But the cup did *not* pass from Him! The better part of His prayer won the victory, and that was, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." You will be heard, too, if that is always the principal clause in your prayers. But you may not be heard by being delivered from the trouble. Even the prayer of faith is not always literally heard! God, sometimes, instead of taking away the sickness or the death, gives us Grace that we may profit by the sickness, or that we may triumph in the hour of death. That is better than being literally heard, but even the most believing prayer may not meet with a literal answer. He "was heard in that He feared." Yet He died and you and I, in praying for ourselves, and praying for our friends, may pray an acceptable prayer and be heard—yet they may die, or we may die.

8. *Though He were a Son.*—Emphatically and above us all, "a Son,"

8. *Yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.* He was always obedient, but He had to learn *experimentally* what obedience meant, and He could not learn it by the things which He did—He had to learn it "by the things which He suffered"—and I believe that there are some of the most sanctified children of God who have been made so, by His Grace, through the things which they have suffered. We may not all suffer alike. We may not all need the same kind of suffering. But I question whether any of us can truly learn obedience except by the things which we suffer.

9. *And being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.* "Being made perfect." "What?" asks one, "did Christ need to be *made* perfect?" Not in His Nature, for He was always perfect in both His Divine and His Human Nature, but perfect as a Savior, perfect as a Sympathizer—above all, according to the context—perfect as a High Priest. "Being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." Christ will not save those who refuse to obey Him, those who will not believe in Him. There must be

an obedient faith rendered unto Him, or else the virtue of His passion and death cannot come to us.

10. *Called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec.* It is a glorious mark of our Lord Jesus that He was "called of God an High Priest." He did not assume this office to Himself, but this high honor was laid upon Him by God Himself.

11, 12. *Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing you are dull of hearing. For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which are the first principles of the oracles of God.*—I hope it is not true of any of you, dear Friends, but it is true of many Christians that they learn very little to any purpose and always need to be going over the A B C of the Gospel. They never get into the classics, the deep things of God! They are afraid of the Doctrine of Election, of the Doctrine of the Eternal Covenant, and of the Doctrine of the Sovereignty of God, for these Truths of God are meant for men of full age, and these poor puny babes have not cut their teeth yet! They need some softer and more childlike food. Well, it is a mercy that they are children of God! It would be better, however, for them to grow so as to become teachers of others—"You have need that one teach you again which are the first principles of the oracles of God."

12-14. *And are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For everyone that uses milk is unskillful in the Word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.* Do not be frightened, you who have lately been brought into the Lord's family! We are not yet going to feed you with meat! We shall be glad enough to serve you with milk for the present. At the same time, let us all be praying to the Lord to make us grow, that we may know more and *do* more, and *be* more what the Lord would have us to be! A child is a very beautiful object. An infant is one of the loveliest sights under Heaven, but if, after 20 years, your child were still an infant, it would be a dreadful trial to you. We must keep on growing till we come to the stature of men in Christ Jesus! God grant that we may do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—371, 509, 869.

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

"A PECULIAR PEOPLE"
NO. 2530

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 15, 1897.
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"But know that the LORD has set apart him that is godly for Himself: the Lord will hear when I call to Him."
Psalm 4:3.

If you read this Psalm through, you will notice that when David wrote it, he had been pestered and troubled by certain ungodly men who had made a mockery of that which was his greatest delight. They had turned his glory into shame and had proved that they loved folly and falsehood. So he said to them, "O you sons of men, how long will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love vanity and seek after leasing"—or, "lying?" In order that he might stop them from angering him, he reminded them of two great facts. "But know"—he said—understand, do not doubt it, rest assured of it, "know that Jehovah has set apart him that is godly for Himself: Jehovah will hear when I call to Him." Why did David want these men to know those two facts?

Well, first, that they might cease to oppose him, for, if they did but know that the man whom they mocked was really a child of God, set apart by the Most High by a Divine choice to be His own peculiarly favored one, surely they would not go on with their persecution! Those who put Christ to death did it in ignorance, "for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." And we are persuaded that there are many men who now oppose the servant of God who would not do so if they did but know that he really was a servant of God, and that God looked upon him with delight. Therefore David, to stop the cruel mocking of his persecutors, said to them, "Know that Jehovah has set apart him that is godly for Himself: Jehovah will hear when I call to Him."

He may also have had a still better motive and I think that he had—namely, to draw these men towards his God. There is no better way of taking flies than with honey and no better way of getting men to Christ than by drawing them to Him by a display of the privileges and advantages which belong to a godly life. "Know, then," he said, "you who are saying, 'Who will show us any good?' And who are seeking after mere vanities that never can satisfy you—know you that in true religion there is to be found that which will delight you, and which will give you rest and peace. Know this, 'that Jehovah has set apart him that is godly for Himself.'" I would to God that some to whom we describe the choice privileges of the people of God may be moved to cry—

"With them numbered may we be,
Now and through eternity!"

But, whether this Truth of God has either or both of these effects upon the minds of men, or whether it shall have no effect at all, still it is a Truth never to be denied, "that Jehovah has set apart him that is godly for Himself." So, as God may help me at this time, I shall briefly speak, first, upon *a peculiar character.* "Him that is godly." Secondly, upon *a peculiar honor.* "Jehovah has set apart him that is godly for Himself." And, thirdly, upon *a peculiar privilege.* "Jehovah will hear when I call to Him." Oh, that every one of us may possess the character, receive the honor and enjoy the privilege of which our text speaks!

I. First, then, let us notice A PECULIAR CHARACTER—"him that is godly."

On reading the Psalm, it is very clear that this is *a man misunderstood,* or, *not understood on earth.* The ungodly cannot comprehend the godly! They scoff at them, they turn their glory into shame because they, themselves, love vanity and seek after lying. The godly man is not understood by the people among whom he dwells—God has made him to be a stranger and a foreigner in their midst. They who are born twice have a life which cannot be comprehended by those who are only born once! Those who have received the Spirit of God have a new spirit within them which is so amazing that the carnal mind cannot perceive what it is! Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. When a man has become a new creature in Christ Jesus, the old creatures round him cannot make heads or tails of him. They look at him, they see him actuated by motives which they cannot understand! They see that he is kept in check by forces which they do not acknowledge, that he is constrained by energies of which they are not partakers and that he looks for a something which they do not desire. So the Christian becomes, in a measure, like Christ, Himself, of whom the poet sings—

"The Jewish world knew not their King,
God's everlasting Son."

"Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not." "You are a very peculiar person," said one to a Christian. "I thank you for that testimony," answered the Christian, "for that is what I desire to be, as Peter says, 'You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.'" "Ah," said the other, "but there is a strangeness about you that I do not like. I feel, sometimes, that I cannot endure your company." "I thank you again," replied the Christian, "for you only fulfill our Lord's words, 'Because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.'"

Yes, dear Friends, it is so, and if you never strike the worldling as being a strange person. If you never get the mocking laughter of the ungodly. If they never slander you. If you never detect any difference between yourself and them—and they never discover any between themselves and you—it must be because *you are not a genuine child of God.* Ishmael will mock Isaac. It is not possible that the two seeds—the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman—should agree together if they act

according to their nature. Do not wonder, therefore, if you, like David, have to bear persecution from those who cannot comprehend your new life, "for you are dead," and the world says, "Bury the dead out of sight." "You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." But the worldling does not understand the peculiar character of the godly, or delight in it.

But notice that, according to our text, this peculiar character is *understood in Heaven.* God knows what godliness is, for He has created it, He sustains it, He is pledged to perfect it and His delight is in it! What matters it whether you are understood by your fellow men or not, so long as you are understood by God? If that secret prayer of yours is known to Him, seek not to have it known to anyone else. If your conscientious motive is discerned in Heaven, mind not though it is denounced on earth. If your designs—the great principles that sway you—are such as you dare plead in the Great Day of Judgment, you need not stop to plead them before a jesting, jeering generation. Be godly and fear not! And if you are misrepresented, remember that should your character be dead and buried among men, there will be "a resurrection of reputations" as well as of bodies! "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." Therefore be not afraid to possess this peculiar character, for though it is misunderstood on earth, it is well understood in Heaven!

Let us inquire what this character is which is misunderstood on earth, but understood in Heaven. What does the text mean when it mentions, "him that is godly"?

Well, it means, first, *a God-fearing man.* This is a common term, "a God-fearing man." There are many who have not the fear of God before their eyes. Whether there is a God or not, is a matter of small consideration to them. They do not care which way the discussion terminates, for God is not in all their thoughts and, as long as He is not there, it does not matter to them whether He is anywhere! There are some who are not afraid of the terrors of God even with regard to the world to come! At any rate, they flatter themselves that they shall die at ease even if they live in wickedness and, for the present, they even dare to defy the Most High! They have been heard—and our blood has chilled as we have heard them—they have been heard to invoke condemnation from His hand as they have blasphemed His holy name!

The godly man is one who fears God. He would not take God's name in vain, he would not willfully violate God's Law, he would not do anything that would grieve the Most High. And when he does so through infirmity, or sudden temptation, he is, himself, grieved that he should have grieved his God, for the fear of the Lord is upon him! He would not wish to stand at the judgment-bar of God, to be judged according to his works, apart from Jesus Christ, his Lord. He would dread such a thing! The name of God, the Person of God—the Character of God—these are matters of holy awe with him. His soul is filled with hallowed trembling while he thinks

thereon—and everything that has to do with God is sacred to him. Heaven is no trifle and Hell is no trifle to him. The Book of God is no fable to him, the Day of God is hallowed by him and the Church of God is dear to him, for he is a God-fearing man! Often would he have done this or that, but he said, with Nehemiah, "So did not I, because of the fear of God." When he is sorely tempted to evil, he asks, with Joseph, "How, then, can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Now, dear Friend, if you go no further than that, and are a God-fearing man, I have great hopes for you and I ask you to look at my text with hope—"Know that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself."

But, advancing another step, a godly man is a *God-trusting man.* He is one who has learned to entrust his soul to the hands of God as unto a faithful Creator, one who has trusted his sin with God, beholding it laid upon the Divine Substitute. He has trusted his eternity with God. He believes that he shall die the death of the righteous and that his last end shall be like His. He is resting in the living God, he trusts God about the present, he takes his troubles to God, yes, and if the day opens without trouble, he will not enter upon it without taking his day to God, nor will he fall asleep without committing his night to God. He trusts in God for little things, saying, "Give us this day our daily bread." He trusts in God for great things, saying, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One."

So, dear Friend, if you are a God-trusting man, as well as a God-fearing man, take my text—for it tastes like a wafer made with honey—lay it on your tongue and let it dissolve into your soul and sweeten your whole life! "Know that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself."

Then advance still further and understand the word, "godly," as meaning *a God-loving man.* A godly man loves God! He is one whose heart has gone out after God. He loves his dear ones here below, but his God he loves more than all of them! He loves them in God and loves God the more for giving them to him, but God, Himself, has become his great object of delight! I am sure that he is a saved man who can follow David in saying, "God, my exceeding joy." When one comes to joy in God, it is a sure evidence of godliness! The hypocrite has no delight in God. He may have a delight in the outward parade of religion, or in the name of godliness—possibly he has a delight in the bliss of Heaven which he sometimes hopes that he may enjoy—but in God, Himself, he has no delight. Whereas, to the true Believer, God is Heaven—

"Were I in Heaven without my God,
'Twould be no Heaven to me."

"Delight yourself, also, in the Lord," says David, and the genuine Believer does! He can say of his God—

"You are the sea of love,
Where all my pleasures roll.
The circle where my passions move,
The center of my soul."

So that he is a godly man who is a God-loving man.

And, assuredly, he is a godly man who is *a God-knowing man.* He does not merely fear and trust and love God but he has come into personal acquaintance with God. The other day I saw a book entitled, "Is God Knowable?" Well, dear Friends, that is a question that can be answered by some of us. We can say, "We know Him. We have spoken to Him and He has spoken to us. Our spirit has come into actual contact with the Divine Spirit! We do not need anybody to prove this Truth of God to us, for it is a matter of faith, no, of joyous, ecstatic, delicious experience!—

'My God, the spring of all my joys,
The life of my delights,
The glory of my brightest days,
And comfort of my nights.'"

"My God, it is a fact that I have touched You and that You have touched me—that I have spoken to You and that You have spoken to me—and it is that fact which has forever made me glad." O Beloved, if you know not God, what do you know? How are you a child of God if you do not know your Father? How are you saved if you do not know your Savior? How can you come to the Table to remember Him whom you never knew? And must you not expect to hear Him say at the last, "Depart from Me; I never knew you"? If we know Him, we are known of Him—the two things go together and are much the same—but, if we know Him not, then He knows us not in the sense of acquaintance and of love.

Once more, a godly man is *a God-like man.* We reach this point, you see, by steps—the man is God-fearing, God-trusting, God-loving, God-knowing and then, God-like. Can a man be like God? Ah, me, what a wide discrepancy there must always be between God and the best of men! We are unlike God even in our likeness to Him! He who is most like God is only like He as a dewdrop is like the sea, or as a glowworm is like the sun! Yet Grace does make us like God in righteousness, true holiness and especially in love. Has the Holy Spirit taught you, my dear Friend, to love even those that hate you? Have you a love that leaps out like the waters from the smitten rock so that every thirsty one may drink? Would you gladly love the poorest and the most depraved into the wealth and glory of your Master's love? Do you love even those that render you no love in return, as He did who gave His life for His enemies? Then are you, to that extent, made like God. And do you choose that which is good? Do you delight yourself in peace? Do you seek after that which is pure? Are you always gladdened with that which is kind and just? Then are you like your Father who is in Heaven! You are a godly man and this text is for you—"Know that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself."

II. This leads me to dwell with pleasure upon A PECULIAR HONOR which has been conferred upon this peculiar character. "The Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself."

You see, then, that *God discerns godliness in men.* There is a great deal of dross in all of us, but God spies whatever gold there may be. If there is any gold in the ore, God preserves the lump because of the precious metal that is in it. I know, my dear Brother, that you are not per-

fect. Perhaps you are, at this moment, grieving over a great fault. If so, I am glad you have the godliness that makes you grieve over sin. I know, my dear Friend, that you are not what you want to be, or wish to be, or ought to be. Still, you *do* fear the Lord and you *do* trust Him and you *do* love Him. Now, the Lord can spy all that out and He knows about the good that is in you. He casts your sin behind His back, but that which is of His own Grace, He sets apart for Himself—and He sets you apart for Himself because of the good which is in you. I like to notice, in Scripture, that although God's people are described as a very faulty people, and although the Lord is never tender towards sin, yet He is always very gentle towards them. If there is any good point about them, He brings it out and He is most gracious to them—and His love casts a mantle over a thousand of their mistakes and errors! If God's people mentioned in the Old and New Testaments had all been perfect, I should have despaired, but, because they seem to have just the kind of faults that I grieve over in myself, I do not feel any more lenient toward my faults, but I have the more hope that I, also, am among those whom the Lord sets apart for Himself because they are godly.

And, dear Friends, know yet further that *God makes those who are really godly to differ from the world.* He will not let them be like the world. Some of them try to be so, but they must not. And the world sometimes gets the victory over them for a time and makes them like itself—but they soon get out of its power. Poor Samson told the secret of his great strength and the Philistines cut off all that long hair of his which used to hang down his back till he seemed to be like a wild man of the woods! The Nazarite told his secret and then they clipped away his hair and set him to grind in the mill when they had put out his eyes! They should have had a razor drawn over his head every morning, but they forgot to do that—and when his hair had grown, again, he pulled the pagan temple down upon his enemies and, in his last moments, won a glorious victory for his nation, Israel!

If the devil ever does cut the Nazarite locks of a true child of God, they will grow again in time. They must grow again and they grow when the devil is not noticing them—and then the old strength of Grace comes back again. I have known a child of God fall, like Peter did, when he denied his Master. Yet, when the locks of his consecration had grown, again, in a short time there was Peter preaching a sermon that brought 3,000 to Christ! And the devil had not made much of a gain of Peter, after all, when once he came back to his Lord. But, oh, what a mercy it is to be kept so as never to lose those locks of consecration! Oh, that we may differ from the world in a thousand respects, so that we may go through it as Mr. Bunyan pictures his pilgrim going through Vanity Fair! "Buy, buy, buy," the merchants cried, but he did not buy any of their wares. And when they pressed him very hard, he said, "We buy the truth and sell it not." All he had to do was to go through the fair—and that is what you and I have to do. Let us go through the world as those who are in it but not of it—the Lord always, by His Grace, making us to differ

from other men! There is no need to take off the collar of your coat, or to talk differently or to dress differently from ordinary folk. Dress and talk like other people who act as they should, but let your difference from the world be *spiritual*—real, true, not merely indicated by some outward emblem or badge—but seen in the deportment and carriage of your entire life!

Further, the Lord sets apart him that is godly for Himself by *dealing with His people differently from others.* I fancy that I hear somebody say, "I stoutly deny that!" Well, deny away, brother, if you like, for, apparently the Lord does *not* deal with His people differently from what He does with others, and it says, even in Scripture, "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and the wicked." Here is a man of God, but the Sabeans steal his oxen and his asses. The Chaldeans carry away his camels, the fire of God burns up his sheep and his servants. And his children are destroyed by a great wind from the wilderness. Yes, yes, yes! But read the whole of Job's story and see that when God turns, again, his captivity and gives him twice as much as he had before, and enables him to gain a great victory over the devil, after all, God did not deal with Job as He dealt with others!

"Oh," says another, "but whom the Lord loves, He chastens!" Yes, and that is one of the ways in which He differs in His dealings with them and with others, for, sometimes, He does not chasten the ungodly, but lets them have no trouble in their lives and no pangs in their death. He lets them have as much pleasure as they can have, for what they get *here* is all they will ever have! Whereas He chastens His own people for their present and eternal good. My dear Friend, there is never exactly the same Providence to the ungodly as to the godly. There is a difference, somewhere. There is a difference in the end, if nowhere else, for to you and to me, as God's people, "all things work together for good." But they do not work together for good to the ungodly! There may, apparently, be the same causes at work, but they do not produce the same results.

So God *does* make a difference between the godly and the rest of mankind. And there is one peculiar point of difference—He has set them apart for Himself! For what purpose? That they may be His Friends, and *that He may converse with them.* God does not usually come to this earth to talk with kings and princes—the greatest king is but a brother-worm like the rest of us—but God has often been here to converse and commune with His poor people. If men are godly, whether they are rich or poor, God has fellowship with them! It seems amazing to me that God should so often be unknown in His own world. The great majority of His creatures never hear His voice and never give a response to His call! But the godly, when they hear the voice of their God saying to them, "Seek you My face," cry out at once, "Your face, Lord, will we seek!" There are thousands at this moment speaking with God, but all of them are godly people. And God is speaking to them. The Holy Spirit is holding high communion with many of the sons and daughters of Adam, but only with those who are godly! Even now there is a great gulf between God and the

ungodly—their backs are turned to Him and, at the last He will bid them keep on doing what they have been doing, for He will say to them, "Depart from Me, you cursed."

But His people are always coming, coming, coming to Him and, at the last He will bid them continue to do what they are now doing, for to them He will say, "Come, you blessed of My Father." Oh, yes, amazing as it is, it is true that we do have conversation with God, for "the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself" to be His friend and His constant companion!

Moreover, God has also set apart him that is godly *that He may use him.* If you are a godly man, God will make you His own servant and He will send you on His errands. And He will be with you all the while. He will employ you to carry messages of comfort, messages of warning, messages of invitation to those who need them. If you are godly, God will use you! He will not use dirty vessels, but when we are clean, washed by His own hands in the cleansing Fountain, then He will use us for His own purposes. He has reserved us, He has monopolized us for Himself alone! We sometimes sing—

"Take my hands, and let them be,
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee."

We say to God, "Take my lips, my eyes, my ears, my feet, my whole being; reserve me for Yourself." That is exactly what the Lord has done with the godly! You sometimes see certain things marked, "Reserved." That is the label that God has put on every Christian—"The Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself." Nobody but your God is to have you in His possession or control, for you belong wholly unto the Most High!

Know this, Beloved, for, *at the last, God will acknowledge you as His.* Before astonished worlds, when ungodly men shall not dare to lift up their faces, God will acknowledge you in that day as belonging to Him if you are godly. Your righteousness shall come forth as the light and your judgment as the noonday, for God has made you His own and set a hedge about you! And none shall destroy you, or separate you from His Son. "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels," for He has set apart the godly for Himself!

III. Now I must close by speaking briefly of a peculiar privilege. "The Lord will hear when I call to Him."

This means, first, "He *will grant me an audience.* He will hear what I have to say." There were certain princes of Media and Persia who had the right to come to the king whenever they pleased. Such is the right of all the godly—whenever you desire to speak with God, God is waiting to hear you. Oh, what a privilege is this! There are none of us who could go to see earthly kings and queens whenever we liked—we would have to be properly introduced and go through all manner of forms and ceremonies. But through the one Mediator between God and men, we have the right at any moment of the day or night to have an audience with the King of kings and Lord of lords!

It means, next, *"The Lord will not only hear, but He will answer me."* Answer is intended in the word, "hear"—"The Lord will hear when I call to Him." Ask what you will, O you children of the King, and it shall be done unto you! Ask Him not merely for the half of His Kingdom, but for the whole of it, and you shall have it. "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?"

I am not going to preach about that part of my subject, I only want to apply it. Many of you, dear Brothers and Sisters, desire to commune at the Lord's Table, yet I hear one say, "I feel so dull, I do not know whether I dare come to the Table. I seem as if I were dead and I cannot get out of this cold, lethargic state." Let me whisper this message in your ear—"The Lord will hear you when you call to Him." Now, then, pray, "Lord, quicken me."—

"Dear Lord! And shall we ever lie
At this poor dying rate?
Our love so faint, so cold to You
And You 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."

You need not be dull, you need not be lethargic—up with you, for you have wings! Ask the Lord to help you to stretch them out that you may rise superior to everything earth-born and groveling, up into communion with the Most High. Try the power of prayer now!

"Ah," sighs another, "but I feel so desponding, I am as heavy as lead. If I were thrown up, I should fall down again. I have so many doubts, I have such a sinking of spirit that I often question whether I am a child of God at all." Now listen to our text—"The Lord will hear when I call to Him." Call unto Him, "Lord, bring my soul out of prison! Lord, appear to Your poor servant!"—

"Shine, Lord, and my terror shall cease,
The blood of Atonement apply.
And lead me to Jesus for peace,
The Rock that is higher than I."

There is no need for you to be "down in the dumps."—

"Why should the children of a King
Go mourning all their days?"

Come, Brothers and Sisters, you can get rid of those clouds—

"Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw,
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw,
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings every blessing from above."

Try it now, believing and expecting that the Lord will hear you! You see, He has set you apart for Himself—you belong to Him, you are His treasure, His jewel, the signet on His finger, the delight of His heart! Your name is engraved on the palms of His hands! Do you think He wishes you to be in this miserable state? Oh, no, He has sent the Comforter to

deal with just such as you are! One Person of the Divine Trinity has undertaken the office of comforting the people of God, therefore He must want you to be happy and comfortable. Cry to Him to bring you up out of your low estate.

But I hear a Brother say, "I have a great trouble on me, I have sustained a very heavy, a very serious loss in my business." Another says, "I have lost a dear child and there is another loved one sickening." "Ah," cries one, "if you were to step into my house, you would find it like the wards of a hospital! Everybody in it seems to be ill. I am the man that has seen affliction?" Are you, dear Brother? Then you are the very man who ought to pray and to say, "The Lord will hear when I call to Him." He will either take your trouble away, or else make you glad that it ever came. He will either take your burden off, or else He will give you a strong back to bear it! I do not think it matters much which it is—whether He takes off the burden or strengthens the back. You know, the deeper your troubles, the louder shall be your song at the last—and God will get more glory out of you by a life of trial than if you had a smooth path all the way. Come, then, call to Him!

"The Lord will hear when I call to Him." This seems a very wonderful sentence. What is there in me which is a reason why the Lord should hear me when I call to Him? Let me explain this marvel. There is a little boy who lives at your house and I say to him, "I have called to see your father, but he will not see me." "Oh," says the lad, "he always sees me." "Your father will not let me speak to him." "He always lets me speak to him," says the boy. What is there in that little child that makes the man hear *him* when he will not hear *me*? Why, you see, it is his own boy! And the father will, of course, see and hear his own child. And you are the Lord's own child, so He will hear you! Therefore take your troubles to Him. If the father will not hear his boy in ordinary times, yet when the lad cries, "O father, I feel so ill!" the loving parent says, "Come here, my child, and tell me all about it." That is what the Lord says to you now, my poor, weary, heavy-laden Brother. The Lord will hear you, I am quite sure of it. Therefore call on Him and get rid of those burdens.

"Ah," says one, "but my trouble is that I want to have my children converted." Then, pray for them, pray for them! "Oh, but it is my husband who is not a Christian!" says another. Then, pray for him. "I have prayed," says one. Pray on, dear Sister, and the Lord will hear you! "I am afraid my husband will not be saved." Well, you must not be afraid, but say with David, "The Lord will hear when I call to Him." "Ah," says another, "but I have to go back tomorrow into business and I shall have to work with so many ungodly men—my life is one long struggle." Well, never mind about that tonight—it is not Monday, yet. Let us get Monday's Grace when Monday comes! And let us now enjoy ourselves as we repeat this precious text, "The Lord will hear when I call to Him."

He will either stop those wicked men's mouths, or else He will open yours. He will give you the right word by way of reply, or else He will not let them say anything that needs a reply. Only tell the Lord about them!

You would like to come and see me and tell *me* about them, but I do not particularly want to hear it and I cannot do you much good if I *do* hear it. Go and tell my Master about it! "I want to speak with some Christian friend." Well, do so, if you like, but remember that—

"Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To Heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oftener be,
'Hear what the Lord has done for me!'"

"The Lord will hear when I call to Him." Call unto Him now and He will hear and answer you! And so let us come to His Table, happy and joyful, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:25-32.

Verse 25. *My soul cleaves unto the dust: quicken me according to Your Word.* "I feel heavy, unhappy, dull. 'My soul cleaves unto the dust.' Or I feel worldly, lethargic, lifeless. 'My soul cleaves unto the dust.' There is nothing but the power of new life that can separate me from that dust! 'Quicken me according to Your Word.'" Divine life is the great cure for most spiritual evils. When a man has vigorous life in his constitution, he throws off many diseases. And when the soul is full of spiritual life, it masters a great number of evils. "My soul cleaves unto the dust: quicken me according to Your Word." That is good pleading—"according to Your promise, for You have promised to quicken me. It is the nature of Your Word to be quick and quickening; therefore, Lord, 'quicken me according to Your Word.'"

26. *I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statutes.* "I have confessed my wrong; now, O Lord, teach me what is right! I have acknowledged my sin; now, O Lord, lead me in the paths of holiness! 'Teach me Your statutes.'"

7. *Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works.* He who fully understands the way of God's precepts must talk of His wondrous works. There is a power about that Truth of God in the heart to unloosen the most stammering tongue! We are bound to speak of that which God teaches us. "Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works."

28. *My soul melts for heaviness: strengthen me according to Your Word.* Are any of you, dear Friends, in that condition? Do your hearts melt within you? It is a sore trouble, as I know full well. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity," but when his very soul melts for heaviness, what is he to do, then? Why, even *then* he may pray! No, then he *must* pray and this may be the burden of his prayer, "Strengthen me according to Your Word." Notice, Beloved, how the Psalmist keeps harping upon that string—"according to Your Word." If your prayer is according to God's Word, you may expect a comfortable answer, sooner or later. We know that God will not act contrary to His Word. He who is not a man of his word is despised and if there could be One who was not a God of His

Word, what would be said of Him? But, my tried Friend, He will make His Word true to you to the very letter! Therefore still cry to Him, "Strengthen me according to Your Word."

29. *Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me Your Law graciously.* "Lord, let me not be pestered by liars, and let me never fall into any measure of falsehood myself." There is a way of thinking better of yourself than you deserve, which is a form of lying. There is a method of supposing that you have experienced what you never have experienced and that you have attained to what you never have attained—that also is a way of falsehood. May God remove it from us and may we have the Law of the Lord written on our hearts! "Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me Your Law graciously."

30. *I have chosen the way of Truth.* "I want to be true, I want to know the Truth of God, I want to feel the Truth, I want to practice the Truth—'I have chosen the way of Truth.'"

30. *Your judgments have I laid before me.* "Like a map, so that I might follow the way of Truth as I see it drawn out in letters of light in Your Word." The man who spreads out God's Word before him, like a map of the road, is not likely to make a mistake in his journeying!

31. *I have stuck to Your testimonies.* I like that word, "stuck." "I have stuck to Your testimonies." "I could not be drawn or dragged away from them. Some have told me of some fine new ideas and modern grand discoveries, but 'I have stuck unto Your testimonies.' They came before me with something very artistic and scientific, but 'I have stuck unto Your testimonies'"

31. *O LORD, put me not to shame.* You may rest assured that He never will! If a man clings to God, God will cleave to him. If we are not ashamed of God, He will never put us to shame, but we shall go from strength to strength glorying in His Truth and Grace.

32. *I will run the way of Your commandments, when You shall enlarge my heart.* There is an enlargement of the heart that is very dangerous, but this kind of enlargement of the heart is the most healthy thing that can happen to a man! A great heart, you see, is a running heart. A little heart goes slowly, but an enlarged heart runs in the way of God's Commandments. Oh, for a heart full of love to God! And then to have that heart made larger, so as to hold more of God's love! Lord. enlarge my heart in that sense! Let me feel at home and at liberty with You! Let the last link of my bondage be snapped. Amen.

HYMNS FROM *"OUR OWN* HYMN BOOK"—146 (VERSION II), 89, 87.

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

A BOUNDLESS BENEDICTION
NO. 2531

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 22, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 10, 1884.

"By the Almighty, who shall bless you with blessings of Heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies under."
Genesis 49:25.

You must have noticed, when reading Jacob's prophecies concerning his sons, that the good old man, when he came to talk about Joseph, suddenly seemed to be freer of speech than while he was addressing any of the others. The dying flame of life within him appeared to burn up more brightly at the sight of the son of his old age, the darling of his heart. The blessing which Jacob pronounced upon Joseph was infinite in extent—he seemed to ransack Heaven and earth in order to express the desire of his soul—and what he knew as a Prophet to be the purpose of God.

It is observable, here, and it is to be noted in a great many other places, that God's richest blessing often falls upon those who have been the most tried. This boundless benediction is to come upon "the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brothers" through their jealousy, ill-will and malice. All this blessing is for the one whom the archers sorely grieved, at whom they shot and whom they desperately wounded. So have you and I observed, Beloved, that as our tribulations abound, so our consolations abound by Christ Jesus. It seems as if it were necessary for a life which is to win the highest blessing, that it should be greatly checkered with affliction. You must go down if you are to rise up! You must carry heavy ballast if you are safely to bear full sails. It has been so, in the experiences of many of us, till we have come to this conclusion—in days of joy we tremble for all the good which the Lord has made to pass before us—but in days of trial we rejoice because we are expectant of a greater weight of glory and of the peaceable fruits of righteousness which will, by-and-by, be ours through our troubles!

I think all of us who are wise would be willing to take the blessing of Joseph. We might not like to be with him as he was despised by his brothers. We might not care to be put into the pit with him. We might not wish to be cast into prison with him. But we may be well content to take the bitters with the sweets, for, when Joseph came to the sweets, they were exceedingly sweet, indeed!

Remember, too, that Joseph was not only a specimen of a tried saint, but also of a separated saint. There are some of God's people who are so surrounded by adversaries that they have to go to Heaven very much

alone. It is preferable to go with Mr. Great-Heart, the women and children and old Father Honest and Mr. Valiant-for-Truth—and all the good company who make up the Church of God on pilgrimage. But sometimes there is a pilgrim who has to pursue his journey all by himself. It is somewhat of a loss for him, for he misses many of the blessings of Christian communion—but God has a way of making up for all His people's losses if they are but faithful to Him. So Joseph, though he had not fellowship with his brothers, found better fellowship in his God and he was greatly the gainer! Am I at this moment addressing a tried child of God who is compelled to pursue his way very much in solitude? Then, I pray you, ask the Lord to give you the blessings of the text—the blessings that shall be over your head. "Blessings of Heaven above." And the blessings that shall be under your feet—"blessings of the deep that lies under."

Moreover, to complete the description of Joseph, I notice that he was not only tried and separated, but he was very severely tempted. I need not do more than just allude to his temptation in the house of Potiphar. For so young a man, how well he behaved! How gloriously he showed that he truly feared God! And I believe that any of us who are exposed to unusual temptation, if we only have Grace enough to resist it, are on the road to a far larger blessing than the untempted can expect. The Lord tries us in different ways and when we come forth out of the furnace as gold seven times purified, then there is some honorable use to which that gold is to be put! Are you tempted just now, dear Friend? Is it something very pleasant to the flesh, but very deadly to the spirit? Escape for your life and in that act of escape, you will have opened a window through which the sunshine shall come upon you in an altogether unexpected manner! Perhaps not at the moment, for Joseph had to go to prison and to lie there for a long while, but, before long, you shall see that fidelity to conscience and to the Truth of God will certainly bring its own reward. These preliminary remarks are suggested by the surroundings of our text which show that the blessing came upon the tried, the separated and the tempted Joseph.

"I do not understand," says one, "how trials and blessings go together." Perhaps you do not, but there are many old women here who do—and there are many of us whom you would, perhaps, set down as being very ignorant—who perfectly understand it. You see, experience teaches. There are many who will criticize some of the sentences of Ralph Erskine in his *Believer's Riddle,* and say that these things are contradictory. Just so, but faith has to credit contradictions. If you do not know that the spiritual life is a profound paradox, you do not know anything at all. The way of a serpent on the rock, or of a ship in the sea, is a mere trifle compared with the way of spiritual life in the soul of man! To understand yourself, you must understand the mystery of the two natures and of the daily inward conflict between them—the carnal mind that never can be reconciled to God and that heavenly mind that cannot sin because it is born of God—both of which co-exist in the Believer. They cause him often to be like Paul, in whom there was the company of two

armies, crying, one moment, "O wretched man that I am!" and saying in the same breath, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Please note, next, that God alone is the source of all blessing—"By the Almighty, who shall bless you with blessings of Heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies under." All these are blessings distinctly from God and there is nothing which looks like a blessing which will turn out to be a blessing unless God is recognized in it. If God gives you your wealth, you shall be truly rich—otherwise you shall be one of those poor rich people who enjoy nothing. If God gives you your health and you are grateful for it, you shall have true sanity, for your soul shall be in health even as your body is. Restoration from sickness should always be ascribed to God. Whatever part the physician may play—and he often plays a very important part—yet to God, who gives the physician wisdom and skill, must the gracious result be ascribed. Whatever may be said to be due to nature—and there is no doubt that a good constitution often works for itself more healing than does the doctor's medicine—yet, since that constitution is the gift of God, He is still to be praised! Every moment we owe the breath in our nostrils to the Lord's kind forbearance. This dust would soon return to its brother dust if God did not animate it by His breath. Therefore He is to be praised for every moment of our life. But when, on certain occasions, disease and pain set in and we are rendered extremely weak—and life, then, more apparently than ever, seems to hang upon a thread—if we are restored, our God deserves, then, a still more special song of thanksgiving. Did not King Hezekiah sing unto the Lord when he had been raised up from sore sickness and his life had been preserved? He did not praise the lump of figs which had been the instrument of relieving him, or sing to the praise of the Prophet Isaiah who had prescribed for him—he praised the God who had healed him and magnified *His* holy name! Remember, Beloved, that whatever God gives you is a right-handed blessing for which you are to thank Him, and by which you are to serve Him. But also remember that, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." What you get of the devil and what you get of yourself will prove to be a curse to you—God alone can give you the blessing!

Is it not sweet to think that the Lord is almighty as a blessing God? Jacob says to Joseph, "The Almighty, who shall bless you," and he seems to imply that He will give an almighty blessing! Is it not a glorious thought that God, being infinitely great, does not give as if He were little and that the Infinite does not bless according to the narrow limits of our finite minds? Well may we join with Paul in saying, "Unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." Yes, God is almighty to bless us. Oh, happy is that man who has the blessing of the Lord resting upon him!

And, according to the verse in which our text is found, the Lord delights especially to bless the children of His own servants—"Even by the

God of your father, who shall help you, and by the Almighty, who shall bless you." Do you not feel that the son of your dearest friend has some kind of claim upon you? If you have long loved the father, you naturally take to the children for his sake. And though Grace does not run in the blood, "For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call," yet the God of Abraham does delight in Isaac, and the God of Isaac delights in Jacob, and the God of Jacob blesses Joseph, and the God of Joseph blesses Ephraim and Manasseh! God likes to cleave to His old friends, even to a thousand generations of them that love Him! He will never turn aside from those who keep His Covenant. I count it a far greater honor to be descended from the saints of God than to be descended from the greatest princes who ever stirred the history of the world. Will not you, Beloved, pray for your children as your fathers prayed for you? And will not this verse encourage you to expect a great blessing for your Joseph from the God who has dealt so graciously with you? O young man, may the blessing of the God of your father come upon you, even the blessing of "the Almighty, who shall bless you with blessings of Heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies under!"

Notice, once more, before we get into the very heart of the text, that when God is about to bless His people, He can make the causes of disquietude to become the sources of benediction. Men are, by nature, afraid of the heavens—the superstitious dread the signs in the sky and even the bravest spirit is, sometimes, made to tremble when the heavens are ablaze with lightning. And when the pealing thunder seems to make the vast concave of Heaven to shake and to reverberate, who but God can give us the blessings of the upper sky? As for "the deep that lies under," why, in the imagination of some men, it is the world of darkness and the Valley of the Shadow of Death! And when earthquakes happen, as they do much more often in the East than here, then are men sorely afraid. They know not what lies in the deep caverns beneath them and they tremble, and are dismayed, but God can give us the "blessings of the deep that lies under." He can, in fact, encompass us with blessings so that we shall go forth with joy and be led forth with peace. The mountains and the hills shall break forth before us into singing—and in yon dark forests, the very trees shall clap their hands! Has He not promised that the beasts of the field shall be at peace with us and that the stones of the field shall be in league with us? The stars in their courses fight for the people of God! And the earth below is still moved to its inmost depth by the power of Him that keeps Israel, who does neither slumber nor sleep.

Thus, dear Friends, have I brought you up to the text which I think readily divides itself into two parts and so furnishes us with our themes for meditation—first, *the blessings of Heaven above.* And, secondly, *the blessings of the deep beneath.*

I. First, there were given to Joseph THE BLESSINGS OF HEAVEN ABOVE. And I believe that they are also given to all God's people who are in trouble, who bear themselves well in temptation and who are sus-

tained by Divine Grace as Joseph was. You and I, as God's people, shall have the blessings of Heaven above.

Joseph had them, first, *literally,* that is to say, upon his country. There was the blessing of the sun which, in its season, shone to help vegetation to develop itself, to produce the fruits and to ripen the harvest. There were the blessings of the moon, for, in the darkness of the night men were cheered by it—and the moon has various subtle influences upon plants and people of which we know but little. But, whatever those blessings were, Joseph's land had the blessings of the moon and of the stars. There fell upon his mountains the blessings of the dew which comes at nightfall very heavily in the East—and makes up for the lack of rain. Joseph had the dew and, in due season, Joseph had the rain, too—the early and the latter rains—and the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh rejoiced in possessing a fertile country, a land for which the Lord their God cared very specially. Thus they had, literally, the blessings of Heaven above. And you and I, Beloved, shall have all the blessings of Heaven above, literally, as far as they would be real blessings to us according to that ancient promise, "The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night...The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."

But, just now I am going to show that God's people shall have these blessings *metaphorically*. That is to say, they shall have that which is *represented* by the sun—the sunlight of Divine favor. You shall have fulfilled to you, tried child of God, the benediction of the High Priest, "The Lord bless you, and keep you: the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: the Lord lift up His Countenance upon you, and give you peace." You shall have as much of the light of God's Countenance as you can bear and, if you will walk with Him, as Joseph did, in all carefulness and uprightness, then you shall have that sunlight continually with you, making glad your heart and ripening within you the fruits of Grace to the glory of God!

Then, when the night comes, you shall have the Word of God shining in your soul, like the moon and, oftentimes, the borrowed and reflected light of the Gospel ministry shall be a blessing to you when, otherwise, you would have been in darkness of spirit. You shall have a blessing by night as well as by day—a blessing on your sleep and on your rest, as well as on your labor! God will never cease to bless out of Heaven those whom He has eternally chosen as His own.

Nor shall you, who are the Lord's people, lack the reviving and refreshing dew. If you live near to God, you shall be able to say with Job, "The dew lay all night upon my branch." Oftentimes, when the threshing floor shall be dry, your fleece shall be wet, for the Lord shall send to you a perpetual watering by the dew of Heaven. Has He not said of His vineyard, "I, the Lord, do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day"? O my Brothers and Sisters, it is, indeed, a great blessing when your soul is full of the heavenly dew—the unction of the Holy One—the bedewing of the Holy Spirit! This blessing is also intended for all the people of God.

And you shall have the rain, too, in its own season, for the value of the blessings of Heaven is very much dependent upon the season in which they come. Sometimes it is good for us to be surrounded with a damp atmosphere and dark clouds, but there are times when the plants must have sunlight. And there are seasons when the soul must have delight in its God. You shall have the dampness when you need it and you shall have the brightness when you can bear it. The Lord will give you, just as He gives a land when He means to bless it, the early rain in its season and the latter rain in its season—the dew in its night and the sunlight in its day. Oh, be glad, dear Friend, that all that the high peaks of Bashan and the hills of Ephraim ever possessed shall be yours *spiritually* and you shall bring forth abundant fruit to the glory of God!

Now, for a minute or two, let me show you that this blessing of Heaven above may be looked at as being similar to the *blessing* of the dew and of the sunlight. Look now, not merely at the metaphor, but at *the inward similarity.* The blessings of Heaven, both naturally and spiritually, come to men sovereignly. If we summoned a Parliament, they might talk as much folly as they usually do, but they could not produce a shower of rain by all their talk! If we had all the kings and queens in the world gathered together, they could not give the farmer one sunshiny day when God willed to cover the sky with clouds! He gives dew, or rain, or sunlight according as He wills it. Well, so is it with the Grace of God in all its various forms! It is the Sovereign gift of Heaven and the Lord holds in His own hand the prerogative to give it or to withhold it—

"When He shuts up in fell despair,
Who can remove the iron bar?"

And when He gives light and liberty, who is there that can darken the child of God, or thrust him into the dungeon? It is God who gives the rain, the dew and the sunlight—and it is He, also, who alone can give Divine Grace.

But these blessings of Heaven are effectual as well as Sovereign. When God makes it rain in the East, it rains and nobody has to go outside to see whether it is raining or not. And when the sun shines in the East, it is hot and nobody has to question whether the sun is shining or not. It so shines that you need to get under the shadow of a great rock in a weary land and, in like manner, I know that when God blesses His people, they are blessed! If His Grace descends, He gives a plentiful shower whereby He does refresh His inheritance when it is weary! When His dews fall, they saturate our fleece till we could wring out the water as Gideon did! The Lord never fails to complete all the processes He intends at the various seasons! Who can stand before His cold, or before His heat? So is it with His Grace—it is effectual in accomplishing the purposes of the Most High.

But the blessings of Heaven are also exceedingly pure. What can there be whiter than snow that drops from the sky? What can there be purer than the mountain spring? It is almost too pure for man's sinful palate, but everything that God sends from Heaven is, like Himself, pure and clean. So is His Grace. When it comes into the heart, it is a lovely thing,

a thing of good repute and it makes us, also, to be of good repute when we yield to its power.

And what a sublime thing is that which comes from Heaven! You know how God said to Job, "Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew?" He seemed to ask where else they could come from but from Him—and certainly He it is who bestows His Grace, whatever shape it may take! Every drop of Grace that comes into the soul of a man glorifies the God who sent it, so that the gifts of God's Grace are included in the blessings of Heaven above.

The blessings of Heaven above are also continuous, for, if it does not always rain, then the sunlight takes up its work, or the moon operates upon the earth. But there is always some blessing coming from the sky towards man. The world is never cut asunder from its moorings amid the stars—they all have their ordained influences upon us and, in like manner—no child of God is ever beyond the reach of the sweet influences of the Pleiades of the promises! And God, the great Father of Lights, is always affecting for good the hearts of all His people. Continuous are the blessings which come from Heaven!

So, you see, there is a similarity between the benedictions of Grace and the blessings of Nature.

And, dear Friends, I think that there is a *specialty* about some blessings which proves that they have come from above more distinctly than any others. For instance, that first Grace which works in the heart—is not that just like the rain which comes when nobody is looking for it? The man has never prayed for Grace or, even if he has prayed for it, there is no true prayer ever offered until first of all Grace has come to produce that prayer. The sinner is never beforehand with God. If you begin to pray at this moment, it is because God's Grace has begun to work upon your heart so that you *can* pray. He is always first! That is one of the blessings of Heaven, then—that first movement of the Eternal Spirit upon the dead, chaotic heart—producing light and order. That is surely from Heaven and God has given it to His people.

And do you not see how clearly Grace comes from Heaven because it keeps on coming even when it is not fed by us? Though we often flag in our spiritual experience, the great God never flags. "If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself." Often, when our heart's fire would go out, His flaming love burns so continually that the fire within us is kept alive. Because He perseveres in love, we persevere in Grace. If God changed in His thoughts toward us, we would be utterly cast away, but He does not change and, therefore, we are not consumed. This is another proof that the gift of His Grace is purely and clearly out of Heaven—Heaven's own benison, the blessing of Heaven above.

I can look back upon many mercies which I have received which do not appear to have come to me by any channel except through the blessed Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean not by any human channel. Oftentimes, when we are alone, sweet thoughts refresh us and comforts come flying into our spirit—singing like the birds which are all alive at springtime. We know not how those sweet songsters came, but

we hear them singing! Those are, indeed, blessings from Heaven above that never touch the earth, but come directly from God to your heart. Perhaps you will have more of them soon, in times of greater trouble and direr sickness and, as you get nearer to the Hill Country, when there is only the narrow river between you and the golden shore, then shall you have more and more of the blessings of Heaven above. They are all yours, but they shall come to you in their season.

Finally, under this head, I may say that we *actually and certainly* have the blessings of Heaven above. Why, Beloved, all that there is in Heaven is given to us! There is God the Father in Heaven, and He is our Father. "The blessings of Heaven above" must include the blessing of Him who has begotten us, again, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! Our dear Father's own benediction comes to us warm out of His infinite heart—the heart that gave us Jesus and now can deny us nothing. Oh, what a blessing we have in that love of our Father in Heaven! But Jesus is there, too—

"He who on earth as Man was known,
And bore our sins and pains,
Now seated on the eternal Throne,
The God of Glory reigns"

and all the blessing there is in Him comes streaming down to His people!

There is not one of the children of God who has any idea of a thousandth part of the blessing that he is continually receiving from the Lord Jesus Christ. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell" and of His fullness we are daily receiving, Grace for Grace. There, also, in Heaven is the blessed Spirit, the Comforter, and He blesses us, for He is here as well as there. He is in us and with us, and abides with us henceforth and forever, to illuminate, to comfort, to direct, to refresh, to sanctify, to make perfect. Every form of His blessing is ours. Then, as you look again up to Heaven, you may rest assured that there is not an angel there but is bound to bless you. When the triune God becomes your God, then for certain all the courtiers of the King's palace are your ministers, "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

Beloved in Christ, what is there in Heaven that is not assured to you by your Covenant-keeping God who is eternal, immutable, full of benediction, infinite, almighty in the love that He has to His children? All this blessedness is yours, whether the sun and the moon shine, or are beclouded! All these blessings are yours even as the dew falls and the rain and the snow come down from Heaven, and return not there. At all seasons the windows of Heaven are open and you have not room to receive the blessings that are continually coming to you from above! You do not know how much of blessing you may have—yes, and *shall* have—if you have but Grace to open wide your mouth to ask largely—and to receive largely from Him who gives without stint and without upbraiding. Blessed men, blessed women are you who have believed in Christ and have the blessings of Heaven above! I pity any who have not so believed, for the *curse*—not the blessing—is theirs.

II. Now we must spend a few minutes in considering the second part of our subject, namely, THE BLESSINGS OF THE DEEP BENEATH.

These are the blessings which come from God's works—from Nature—from Providence: *"blessings* of the deep that lies under." Moses called it, "the deep that couches beneath."

This promise may be taken, first, *literally,* as an allusion to wells and springs. Underneath the earth there are great reservoirs of water which are constantly being tapped in these days by men who make artesian wells, but, in that country, where they did not know anything about boring artesian wells, they did know that springs often bubble up from the bowels of the earth in very strange places, sometimes on the very tops of hills! It is a remarkable thing that on the Island of St. Helena, a mere pile of rock which stands up out of the water hundreds of feet above the level of the sea—there are found numerous fountains of water, more than sufficient to supply all the needs of that place. And in all sorts of strange places, where you would not expect to find them, even in deserts, springs come up and create an oasis of green in the midst of the barren sand. So the tribes of Joseph were to have the blessing of springs that bubble up among the valleys, or come leaping down the hills, to make glad the pastures and the fields.

The analogy of that is just this—that all God's people are to have the blessing of *the inward design of creation.* What is it? Those things which you can see are merely the garments of some great thought of God. The sea, the land, the sky—these are, as it were, the words in which some thought of the Eternal is couched—in part concealed, in part revealed. But the great design of Creation is the Glory of God through the salvation of His redeemed. On the innermost heart of Creation, if you could get at it and could read it with the eyes of God, you would see this inscription, "Made for the accomplishment of the salvation of God's elect and, thereby, for the Glory of God." When He made mankind on earth, multitudinous as the bees that swarm out of their hives, the first thought with God was concerning His own people. The race was to live and exist by His supreme mercy, because of His love to His own people—and His people are still made to live that they may be the means of blessing others! First, the bread is given to the disciples and then the disciples give it to the multitude. The first thought of God is that His own children shall be blessed. When I gaze upon the sea with its rolling waves, or look upon the plains and the forests, or think of this round world and the myriads of stars, the first thing I am to remember is this—that it is the love of God which has clothed His thought in these marvelous garments! The deep that lies under them all is His love to His people and that you who are His shall enjoy most blessedly.

And, next, this *is the secret of Divine Providence.* You cannot see the deep that lies under, but you can perceive what is God's design in Providence. Why these wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines and devastations? The man who can read history aright down to the birth of Christ and, making *that the center*, will read on to the death of Christ and all the later history. He will begin to understand that all of it is merely the salvation of the chosen people hammered out—either nearer or more remotely—it all tends to that result. The issues of all events turn

upon the grand Plan of Redemption! It is so in the great matters of life and it is equally so in the little. Your poverty, your sickness, the death of one you love—all of that had in it the deep that lies under—promoting the Glory of God and your eternal safety! So, Beloved, the next time you get where you cannot see to the bottom of the clear waters, say to yourself, "There is a deep that lies under, and that is mine, and I am to have the blessing of it. I cannot see what God means by this experience, but how can such a babe as I am ever hope to understand the Infinite? I was born only yesterday and the Eternal God has lived forever and ever. He must have designs that I cannot grasp. The deep that lies under in Providence is, however, mine."

God's servants, in reviewing their lives, must often be startled to notice how, in their ministry, simple matters are proved to be from the Lord though, at the time, they knew it not. Have you never heard the story of the Scottish minister? It is one which is, beyond all question, a pure matter of fact. He went to a certain place to preach and took with him the sermon which he intended to use. He went upstairs to refresh his memory with his manuscript and knelt to pray. And when he had done praying, he could not find the sermon! He was in a great state of anxiety about it, for he could not remember anything else that he could preach except a sermon upon the text, "You shall not kill." He thought that would be a very odd discourse to deliver when taking an occasional service at a Brother minister's church—and he did not wish to preach it. It was one of a course of sermons that he had preached to his own people upon the Decalogue but, though it was a sermon apparently quite unfit for the occasion, he could remember no other and he, therefore, preached from the text, "You shall not kill"—a sermon against the crime of murder.

When the service was over, there rushed into the vestry a man, apparently demented. And, shutting fast the door that none might hear, he confessed to the preacher that he had committed a murder which had never been discovered. And he received direction from the minister what to do in order that he might find peace with God. That done, the preacher returned to the bedroom where he had prayed—and the first thing he saw when he entered the room was the sermon that he had intended to preach, lying where he could not help seeing it! Often, we do not perceive what is immediately before our eyes—and this good man had not seen his manuscript, for there was a secret design of Providence to be worked through its loss.

There is also a great deep that lies under, not only in Creation and in Providence, but in the *teachings of God in the Scriptures.* You, dear Friends, who have been lately converted, cannot fully comprehend some of the deeper doctrines of our holy faith. It is a mercy that you need not understand them in order to be saved. If I am very thirsty, I do not require to go down into the heart of the earth to see where all the reservoirs of water are—here is a little spring that is bubbling up and I have only to lie down by it and drink. That is enough for me because it quenches my thirst. Of course, after I have done that, I desire to intermeddle with all

knowledge and I would like to go in search of the hidden springs of the great sea of the Truth of God to find out what it is that God calls His deep things, that I may know all that I can concerning them. But, whatever those deep things are, you who love the Lord and live near to Him have the blessing of those deep doctrines, those vast Truths before which the human mind lies prostrate in adoration. They are all yours—you have the blessings of the deep that lies under!

Whatever *God's eternal purpose* which is not yet revealed, may be, it is not for you and me to try to clamber up and gaze upon the mysterious volume wherein is written all that shall yet come to pass. But we may be quite sure that there is *nothing* in that book which is not full of blessing to them that love God and are the called according to His purpose. You can rest content with that! When God is pleased to turn the next leaf of the volume of the future and you hear it rustle, do not be eager to read what the next lines may be. Whether they are of gloom or of joy—stand back and say—

"My God, I would not long to see
My fate with curious eyes,
What gloomy lines are writ for me,
Or what bright scenes may rise."

It is enough for me that my name is in the Book of Life and that, being there, all things must work together for my good! The deep that lies under is mine with all the blessings that are hidden in it.

The more you think on this theme, the more you will see what there is in it, for, after all, there is no dark thing that you can think of but what there is a great deep of blessing underneath it. For instance, what lies under death, itself? Why, resurrection! And Jesus says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." But there could not be any resurrection if there were not death, first! And it is not an ill thing that this body should lie in the grave and have fellowship with Christ in death, that it may afterwards have fellowship with Him in His Resurrection! Do not be content with looking at the top of the soil of the Truth of God, but think of the vast deep of Infinite Mercy and Love that lies underneath it!

But what is at the bottom of all? I answer, *God Himself*. "The deep that lies under" is *God*, for "underneath are the everlasting arms." God's Mercy, God's Love, God's Grace—this is the deep that lies under everything! This deep is unsearchable. As no man can see the great deep that lies under the earth, so we cannot search out or measure the great deeps of everlasting love. This we know—the great deeps under the world are always there. As they were there in Noah's day and answered to God's call and destroyed the earth at His bidding, so they are still there and will be while the earth remains. And there is always, in the heart of God, the immutable deep of Divine Love and faithfulness towards His own Joseph. The deeps are always there and we may always feel sure that those deeps are inexhaustible. The springs that come up from the deep are never dried in summer and they are never frozen in winter. I know a spring which, within a few yards of its source, produces a river which turns a great mill-wheel within a distance of about the length of this Tabernacle from the place in which it comes out of the earth. It is an ex-

traordinary thing, the force that there is in the deep that lies under—a force that is never exhausted! And such is God's eternal love to His chosen.

The best of all is that this great deep that lies under, though unsearchable, immutable and inexhaustible, is, nevertheless, *available*! Look, Moses does but smite the Rock and the waters flow out from the great deep that lies under. God does but speak and in the wilderness waters leap up and streams in the desert. When man could not get at the flood underneath, then God made the flood come welling up for man! And now He has taught man to get at it and man sets his boring machinery to work and, if he does but continue long enough, it is very seldom that he does not, at last, tap God's great wine cellar—the best wine that there ever was—which He brews up among the everlasting hills to make drink for His people. And up it comes, always fresh, clear and sweet, as stored away by God, long ago, and now given out at the touch of man's industry. Oh, dear Friends, I wish that some of you would come and drink of the water that is so freely flowing! And those of you who cannot find it, I want you to begin working with that blessed boring-machine of prayer, and to keep on working right down through all the rocks of doubt and fear—boring, and boring, and boring away till, at last, you come to the Living Water of which you may have enough to drink forever!

At my Nightingale Lane house, I had a well which produced the sweetest water I ever drank. It was 460 feet deep. The man who had it made would have a well sunk only there, so the workmen dug down 100, 200, 300 feet and they quite despaired of finding water. But the owner said, "Keep on working. I will bore to the center of the earth, but I will have the well made, so keep on." And they did keep on till they reached the enormous depth of 460 feet! Then, one day the workmen came up to dinner and they never went down any more—for while they were away the water burst through! They had left their tools below, but they could never get them up any more, and they are there now.

I know some people who have a very deep experience and, for a long time they keep on boring away through all the mud and slush of their feelings. If this is the case with any of you, I hope that you will get through that experience very soon and that you will come to the Living Water. And when it comes rushing up, you will have to drop your tools and just drink to the full of that which God freely gives to all who ask for it! You have only to ask and receive! God grant that you may do so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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

GOD'S LOVE SHAMEFULLY QUESTIONED
NO. 2532

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 29, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"I have loved you, says the Lord. Yet you say, In what way have You loved us?" Malachi 1:2.

Man, by nature, is a lump of ingratitude. He is often ungrateful even to his earthly friends and he is invariably ungrateful to his Best Friend, above, until the Grace of God has changed his heart. Leave him alone and though he may be loaded with mercy, yet he will never bless the hand that gives him the favor. Should he even be allowed to survive so long as a hundred years, unless the Holy Spirit shall deal with him, he will not once remember his God in grateful thankfulness, but he will go on, from the beginning to the end of the century, always receiving, but never rendering back to the Lord anything like gratitude. We often say that ingratitude is one of the worst of sins—and we feel it so when it concerns ourselves. But we quite forget that it must be worse toward God than it is toward us, for, after all, whatever we may do for others, we are only like stepfathers to the blessings we bestow, for every good gift comes directly from the great Father of Lights, even from God, Himself! We may be the channels conveying comfort to others, but the blessing, itself, comes from Him. Shameful, then, is it that all good should come from God and yet that man should be ungrateful to Him who is the great Source of it all. The charge of ingratitude can be made against us *all* as we are by nature—it is not merely of some base, mean, groveling spirits that we are now speaking—but of mankind as a whole, looking at it on a broad scale.

Observe, next, from our text, that the Lord does not like that we should forget His love. He says here, by His servant Malachi, "I have loved you, says the Lord. Yet you say, In what way have You loved us?" And in the prophecy of Isaiah He says, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me." Our ingratitude evidently grieves God's heart—speaking after the manner of men. He cannot bear that we should forget His love—He presses it upon us as a great fact that He has loved us—and He seems astonished that we should, in our ingratitude, ask the shameful question, "In what way have You loved us?"

I am going to show you, dear Friends, that my text has a double bearing and, first, we will view this *Truth of God as it relates to the bulk of men.* There are some to whom God has been exceedingly kind, who are not yet converted. They do not even profess to be His people, yet He has dealt with them in such a way that He might truly say to them, "I have loved you," in the sense in which we read that great Gospel text, "God so

loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." When I have dealt with that point, as God shall help me, we will then *view this Truth as it relates to the Lord's people* and notice that innermost kind of love of which they have tasted. Yet, though God has loved them emphatically, with a very peculiar kind of love, some of them may be in an ill-humor and may be saying, "In what way have You loved us?" An earnest word with them may not be out of place and may do them good.

I. First, then, take the broadest meaning of the text and view THIS TRUTH OF GOD AS IT RELATES TO THE BULK OF MEN.

God had a love to the nation of Israel, yet many in that nation loved Him not, but turned from Him with ingratitude. Even then He still had a *benevolent* affection towards that nation, so that He favored them above all other people, and gave them the means of Grace—and sent to them the Light of God while the rest of the world remained in darkness. Still, I am not going to speak, just now, particularly concerning Israel, but to show the bearing of my text upon many who are living today, whether Jews or Gentiles.

Let us begin by considering *the announcement of the text.* "I have loved you, says the Lord." There are many who have very specially participated in God's favor in the form of *sparing love*. They are yet alive—it is a wonder that they are, for they have passed through a great many accidents. Others have been killed by very small things, but, dear Friends, very *great* things have not killed you. You have been very sick. Disease has laid you low. Several times you have been on the very borders of the grave—the mold seemed to slip away from beneath your feet and you were almost entombed! The doctor thought that there was little hope of your recovery and others thought so, too. Yet here you are, still in the land of the living! You have had perils in rivers, perils on the deep, perhaps perils in battle. You have passed through all manner of perils, yet you have been kept alive with death so near! God has very graciously and mercifully preserved you. He has not allowed you to die in your sins. You are getting rather old, too. I perceive that your hair is pretty thickly sown with gray and from others it has almost gone. I see a bald head here and there, or else the snows of many winters lie white above your brow. Getting on to 70 and yet you have not yielded yourself to Christ—is it so with any whom I am now addressing?

Seventy years of *sparing mercy*! Truly, God has favored you exceedingly. I do not suppose you are so long-suffering as that with any of your fellow creatures! There are some with whom God has had great patience who have not much patience of their own. If anybody offends them, it is a word and a blow and, sometimes, it is a blow first! But here is the Lord provoked to jealousy every day for 50, 60, 70 years—and all that while He has held back His hand from smiting. All these 70 years that tree has stood in the orchard and it has borne no fruit as yet to repay the Owner's labor and care—yet has put back the axe again and again, and said, "Let it alone, let it alone, let it alone this year also." It cannot be always so, you know. And, still, in your case, my unconverted Friend, up to the pre-

sent there has been much sparing love on the Lord's part in permitting you to cumber the ground so long.

That is not all, for there are also many in whom God has exhibited a great amount of *restraining love*. Read the life of John Newton—in his early days he went on board ship, dealt in slaves, traded on the African coast and, at length, became enslaved himself! He went to great lengths in sin, yet he said that there was always something which seemed to check him and hold him back—and no doubt he would have perished in his sin if it had not been that God had put that check upon him. There are some who would have drunk themselves to death long ago, but they could not get the drink, for they were too poor to purchase it. What a blessing that was for them! And there is many a man who would have gone to great excess of riot, but he has had a broken leg, or he has had some infirmity so that he could not do as others did. And if he is not now among the blackest of the black, it is because he could not be. How grateful men ought to be when God thus restrains them from sin! Though not yet saved, it is a great thing to have been kept back from atrocious crimes and open sins.

In a field, one day, I saw a horse that had a clog on its foot—a thing I do not admire at all. So I asked the owner why the horse was so fettered. "Well," he said, "that horse has the bad habit of leaping over the hedges. And if he were free, we could never keep him anywhere. So I would a great deal sooner clog him than lose him." Some of you have, perhaps, had a clog on your lives and you are likely to still have it because the Lord does not mean to lose you! He will not let you get away from Him. I have seen hogs in the country with great collars round their necks, so that they should not be able to break through the hedge—when they wanted to ramble out of the field, they could not. So, sometimes, a man will, by his very poverty and infirmity, be prevented from going into sin which otherwise he would have committed and which would have been to his eternal ruin—and it is a clear proof of the love of God that He has thus restrained him!

I have known others who have been kept back by the check which their early training has had upon them. There are some who cannot sin as others do, for a mother's tears are still remembered by them, and a father's holy example tethers them to something like morality. It is true that they go as far as they can, but there is a something which will not let them find that pleasure in sin which others do. They drink of the cup of devils, but it does not taste to them as it tastes to their companions—the dregs of it are bitter and they often feel that it will not do for them though it does for others. Surely, the Lord is thus saying to them, "I have loved you in thus restraining you and holding you back from sin."

But what a great proof of Divine affection it is when *inviting love* is added to sparing love and restraining love! Many of you have been placed where you have heard the Gospel faithfully preached. It is one thing to go to a place of worship, but I am sorry to say that it is quite another thing to hear the Gospel—for there are places of worship where the newest and strangest thing to the congregation would be a real Gospel discourse! But many of you, dear Friends, have heard the Gospel from your childhood.

You know about the Fall and about the only way of recovery from it. You have heard of the atoning blood and of the way of salvation by simple faith in Jesus Christ. What a blessing it is to even *hear* the Word! There are millions of the human race who have never heard the Good News—and millions, I fear, will yet die without having even heard the *name* of Jesus! Even in our own country and under the semblance of religious teaching, what masses of people we have who never hear the Gospel—they hear about forms and ceremonies, and they are deceived by the falsehoods of priest-craft, but the Truth of God, as it is in Jesus, is an untold tale to them. So, if you have heard the Gospel, and heard it often, there has been, in that privilege, a wonderful manifestation of the love of God to you! Yet, more than that, you have had full, free, earnest, honest, loving entreaties to come to Christ that you may find life in Him. And you have been assured, time out of mind, that, "whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," and that, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." I cannot boast of anything I have done for some of my hearers, but this I can say—if I could know how to preach the Gospel more plainly than I have done, I would be willing to go to school to learn the art of it. I have preached as best I could and, oftentimes, when I might have uttered a fine sentence, or used a pretty expression, I have flung it to the winds that I might say something short and sharp that would cut deep into the conscience and the heart! I care not what men think of me—I want them to think well of my Master and ill of themselves! I want them to escape from sin and fly to Calvary's Cross and find eternal salvation there. And it is no small privilege and favor from God for them to be honestly dealt with by the Lord's servant and to be earnestly entreated to fly to Christ for mercy. "I have loved you, says the Lord." If you want more proofs than these that I have mentioned, they could be given, but there is not time for more just now, as we must pass on to our next point.

After the announcement in the text, "I have loved you, says the Lord," there is a *sentence of complaint*—"Yet you say, wherein have You loved us?" "How has God ever loved me?" one asks—"I have not a coat on my back." But how did you come to be without a coat? You drank yourself into this state, did you not? And you think it would be a token of love from God if He were to let you continue to lead a drunken dissolute life and yet have all you want? Why, would not this great sinful London become a thousand times worse than it is if drunkenness did not bring a man to poverty and rags? Would it be any evidence of God's love to men if He allowed them to live in debauchery and drunkenness, and yet still have all the comforts of this life and not to come to need? I tell you, among all men, I pity most the young lord who has so much gold and silver that he may squander as he pleases and indulge himself in every vice—and then begin again in his evil course! What can that man do but go to the devil unless God's Grace shall stop him?

I talked, some time ago, to a young man who bears a very honored name. His father was one of the best Christian men I have known, yet the son seemed to take a pride in telling me of all his ways of sin. His father's name was not as sacred to him as it was to me, but a thing to be

spat upon! Although he could not truthfully find a fault in his father, yet to him, he was "a fool." As for the young man, when he went on to tell me his story, everything grieved me till he said that he was greatly serving his country by improving the breed of horses and that he had taken to racing. "Oh," I said, "I feel rather glad to hear *that*, for now you will soon get cleaned out. Your money will speedily be gone and that, I trust, will be the way home for you." I asked him whether he knew why Satan did not drive express trains to Hell and when he said that he did not know, I told him that it was because he had found that racehorses carried men and women there faster than anything else that he could invent! And I added that I hoped that, one of these days, he might get a heavy fall and so find himself in the hands of that Great Surgeon who would give him a new heart and a right spirit. We would not encourage any man in any sin whatever, but, sometimes it does happen that the climax of sin becomes the turning-point of the sinner!

It is a great mercy for many of you working men that if you go even a little distance in certain sins, you get pulled up. Instead of its being an evidence of harshness on God's part, it is often a token of special favor. I know that I have often had an opportunity of speaking to men very plainly about their sinful state when they have fallen into trouble—and I have seen a little tenderness in them, then—and there has been an opportunity of bringing before them the claims of Christ. Suppose, now, the father in the parable, when his son was feeding the swine in the far country, had said, "There is my dear boy in great poverty. He is very hungry. I will send him a basket of provisions. He has begun to be in need, so I will make him a present of clothes and money just as if he were at home"? What would have been the effect of such treatment? Why, the prodigal would have stayed in the far country and would have died there, away from his father! His hungry belly was the best blessing that he could have had, with the exception of his father's love! "When he came to himself," through his hunger and need, *then* he said, "I will arise and go to my father." And the miseries of men, though brought on by their own sin, are often God's voice saying to them, "'The way of transgressors is hard. 'Turn you, turn you: why will you die?' Leave that evil road." You who are living in sin have only to look at your afflictions to see, at once, evidences that God has loved you!

I am also addressing a great many others who ought to see God's love to them in their mercies. You have a wife and children about you. You have a good business by which you are able to earn your bread even in these days of keen competition. You have good health and a thousand earthly comforts. O my dear Friend, when there is so much poverty and starvation in this great city, should you not be grateful to God? You may well say—

"Not more than others I deserve,
Yet God has given me more."

The very least you can do, surely, is to serve Him and obey His gracious message. If looked at aright, our mercies and our miseries are equally proofs of love. And there are some to whom God has given very choice tokens of love. You, dear Friend, had a holy father—that was no

small blessing. You had a godly mother—that was another great mercy. You have a praying wife—I do not know a more priceless gift than that! There are some whom I know who cannot get down to Hell, though they seem to try to do so, for, whichever way they move, there is somebody or other praying for them! And they are conscious that, at this very moment, they are the subject of some loved one's prayer. Surely, God has an eye of love upon those whom He has encompassed with His own dear servants who, day and night, are praying for them!

There are others, to whom God has given a very special favor, namely, a tender conscience. When I was a child, if I had done anything wrong, I did not need anybody to tell me of it. I told myself of it and I have cried myself to sleep many a time with the consciousness that I had done wrong! And when I came to know the Lord, I felt very grateful to Him because He had given me a tender conscience. Never tamper with conscience, dear Friends, or seek to make it less sensitive. It will soon get two or three skins over it and become as hard and callous as a farm laborer's hands. It is a great mercy to have the conscience so tender that it bleeds at the slightest touch of sin—and I know some of you who have not yet given your hearts to Christ, who, nevertheless, have a very tender conscience. It is a great help to any man who has it—and you have no need to say, "In what way have You loved me?" You have proof enough of the Lord's favor in the fact of His giving you such sensitiveness to sin! Take care that you do not lose it by the abuse of the privilege.

I have thus put before you God's announcement, and God's complaint.

I close this part of my discourse by reminding you of the *suggestion* in the text. Does it not suggest to you, my dear Hearer, that you should thank God for all His favors towards you if you have been thus loved? Do not be like the hog that eats the acorns under the oak, but never lifts up its head to bless the tree that gives it its food. It is better, as John Bunyan tells us, to imitate the little chicken that never sips a drop of water without lifting its head as if to thank God for every drop it drinks. God give to every one of you a thankful heart! Should it not also be natural to you to try to please Him? But "without faith it is impossible to please Him." If there were anything you could do for God, would you not do it? "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." Do you not think that after all His goodness to you, you should trust Him? Do trust Him—He will never deceive you. Lean upon Him—He will not fail you. And then love Him. May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so!

II. Now, in the second place, we are to VIEW THIS TRUTH AS IT RELATES TO THE LORD'S PEOPLE, those to whom God can say, emphatically, in the highest, deepest, fullest sense, "I have loved you."

And, first, we will notice the *statement on God's part.* "I have loved you, says the Lord." Now that I am addressing those who are in Christ, what a fullness there is in my subject! God loved you, my Brothers and Sisters, long before the world was made! The verse from which our text is taken goes on to speak of Jacob and Esau, and of God's choice of Jacob. So, dear Friends, there was an *electing love* in your case as well as in Jacob's—

"What was there in you that could merit esteem,

Or give the Creator delight?"

Yet He *did* take delight in you even from eternity! Perhaps you are the only converted one in your family—to you has been fulfilled that ancient promise, "I will take you, one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." I looked with something of wonder upon a Sister who came, this week, to join the Church. She could not remember anyone in her family, as far back as she could go, or any relative of any sort, who ever made any profession of religion, or went to any place of worship. She herself was an amazing instance of how the Grace of God gets at some people! There she was, all by herself, like a brand plucked out of the fire. Some of us have had the same experience, while others of us have the still greater joy of belonging to a family where all or nearly all love the Lord—yet it is equally wonderful to us that God has loved us and our families—and set us apart for Himself.

If you begin your meditation there, at the wellhead of *discriminating Grace and electing love*, before all worlds, you can go right on and find some Covenant mercy always at your feet, for the Lord who loved His people gave His Son to die for them! Oh, what love was this! "Herein is love." Giving His Son to die *for* them, He gave His Spirit to live *in* them. Here is wondrous love, again—that the Spirit should come and call us, quicken us, renew us, sanctify us and *dwell in us* and keep us to this day! If we would speak of the love of God toward His people, where shall we begin and where shall we leave off? Everything that God does to His people is all love—sometimes the love is a little disguised, but the love is always there! If He caresses, it is love. If He chastens, it is love. If He smiles, it is love. If He frowns, it is love, for God is Love and to His people nothing else but Love—infinite, boundless, eternal, immeasurable, inexhaustible, unchangeable, perpetual Love! Oh, the Lord has indeed loved His people, and He does love them, and He will love them, and must love them forever and forever! Let their hearts be glad in this fact.

Now we must turn to quite another phase of our subject, that is, *evil questioning on our part.* "Yet you say, wherein have You loved us?" God's people sometimes get into a very ugly temper—some who are in the Lord's family are very strange individuals. I would not speak evil of dignitaries—and every child of God is a priest and a king and, therefore, I must mind what I say. But, really, some of them are strange people, at least at times. An old woman told John Newton she was sure that God chose her before she was born, for He never would have chosen her afterwards. And I think there is some truth in that remark as regards others of the chosen family, for they do seem, sometimes, to get into such an odd condition that one does not know what to make of them. I think, no, I am sure I have heard them say to the Lord, by their actions if not in words, "In what way have You loved us?"

This has happened when they have been in very special trial. One of them said, "All the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning." As much as to say that God whipped him every morning as soon as he was up and kept on whipping him all day long! And he also said, "I was envious of the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked, for there are no bands in their death: and their strength is firm.

They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Verily," he added, "I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence." "Oh!" says somebody, "that was Judas Iscariot who talked like that." No, it was not! It was Asaph, one of the sweet singers of Israel! But he was getting a long way from the right state of mind when he wrote such words as those. And only the Grace of God brought him back—and he had to say, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You." That was a wonderful confession for a man of God to have to make. "Oh!" says one, "then he is very much to be condemned." So he is, but mind that you do not have to be condemned for the same sort of thing, for when a man who once was well-to-do comes to be very poor—when he is also racked with disease so that all his nerves are affected and his spirits sink, he may do what others before him have done!

He is not to be justified, even then, in speaking or thinking harshly of God! It is a great sin and a great wrong under any circumstances, yet it is done, and it is a grievous thing that it should be done. And I pray any child of God who is now doing it to leave off before he is made to smart for it under the Lord's rod. He will not endure such treatment from you. He tells you that He loves you and He wants you to believe it and to know that all your trials and troubles are sent in love and that, in the end, you shall see that all these things have worked together for your good, seeing that you love God and are the called according to His purpose. I do not know to whom this message especially belongs, but I am certain that there is somebody here who ought to take this Truth of God home to his heart and cease from being envious of the wicked and fretting against the ungodly.

Sometimes this evil questioning happens when a true child of God gets sad and depressed. A man may be very brave and full of joy—and the hand of God may be suddenly laid upon him and his spirits may sink almost down to despair. At such times, though it ought not to be the case, yet it often happens that the Christian begins to say, "How can God have loved *me*? I am so low, so sad, so depressed—it cannot be that He loves *me.*" Do not talk like that, dear Friend! Grieve not the Holy Spirit by saying anything of the kind! But turn to your God and say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." "It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him." He has made your Heaven secure! He has given you Christ! He has given you a new heart and a right spirit! And He says that you shall shortly be with Him enthroned above the skies! Therefore do not begin to ask, "In what way have You loved me?"

And, lastly, I have known this question come from professors when they have begun to backslide. When they have grown cold in heart and indifferent in spirit, then they have said, "The Lord does not love us; we have no evidences and tokens that He does." Do you remember what the prodigal's elder brother said to his father? "Lo, these many years have I served you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends." He said, in effect, that he never had any joy! He was just a servant in the house and nothing more. But if he had had no joy, whose fault was it? What did his father say to him? "Son, you are always with me, and all

that I have is yours." If he had liked, he might not only have taken a kid, but a dozen kids and all the goats and sheep his father had, for they were all his own! If a Christian is not happy, let him blame himself, not his Lord!—

"How vast the treasure we possess!
How rich Your bounty, King of Grace!
This world is ours, and worlds to come—
Earth is our lodge and Heaven our home.
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."

So we ought to be glad and to rejoice! And if we do not, it is because we have grown cold and have wandered away from our Lord. If any of you are saying, "In what way have You loved us?" drop that question at once and come home to your Father, and let your Father's heart be a fountain of delight to you—for He loves you and always will!

I should like to stop just now if you will all think over this one thought. It will not trouble you. It is the sweetest thought and yet it is the simplest that ever can be. Let everyone who believes in Christ try to get the marrow out of this truth. "The Lord *loves* me." Not merely that the Lord pities me—thinks of me—cares for me—all that is true. But the Lord loves me, the Lord *loves* me, *the Lord* loves me! Oh, the sweet savor of that word, "love"—to be loved of the great heart which sustains the universe! O child of God, you are as much loved of God as if He had not another child to love! You have all His love, as much as if there were none but you for Him to love! Will you not be glad and rejoice in Him? Cease your murmuring and lift up your soul in song—and bless and praise His holy name from this time forth, and even for evermore! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 9.

Paul begins by expressing his great sorrow because the Jews had rejected Christ.

Verses 1-3. *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that I, myself, were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.* They hated Paul intensely—nothing could surpass the malice of the Jews against the man whom they reckoned to be an apostate from the true faith because he had become a follower of Christ, the Nazarene. Yet note what is Paul's feeling towards his cruel countrymen! He is willing, as it were, to put his own salvation in pawn if by doing so the Jews might but be saved! You must not measure these words by any hard grammatical rule, you must understand them as spoken out of the depths of great loving heart. And when such a heart as Paul had, begins to talk, it speaks not according to the laws of logic, but according to its own immeasurable feelings. There were times when he almost thought that he would, himself, consent to be accursed, "anathema," cast away, separated from Christ—if thereby he

could save the house of Israel, so great was his love towards them! Of course, this could not be, and no one understood better than Paul did that there is only one Substitute and one Sacrifice for sinners. He only mentioned this wish to show how dearly he loved the Jews, so that on their account he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh.

Do you, dear Friends, feel that same concern about your brethren, your kinsmen according to the flesh? If they are not saved, do you greatly wonder that they are not if you have no such concern about them? But when once your heart is brought to this pitch of agony about their souls, if it is our Lord's will, you will soon see them saved!

4, 5. *Who are Israelites; to whom pertains the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.* This was what troubled the Apostle so much concerning the Jews—that they should have such extraordinary privileges and yet should be cast away, but most of all that Jesus Christ, the Savior of men, should be of their race, bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh—and yet they would not receive Him, or be saved by Him! Oh, the terrible hardness of the human heart! And what poor things the richest privileges are unless the Grace of God goes with them to give us the inner secret of true faith in Christ!

6. *Not as though the Word of God has taken no effect.* Paul is always jealous lest anyone should suppose that the Word of God has failed, or that the purpose of God has come to nothing.

6, 7. *For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children.* Now he goes on to show that the blessings of God's Grace do not go according to carnal descent. It is true that God promised to bless the seed of Abraham, yet He meant that word, "seed," in a very special sense.

7. *But, In Isaac shall your seed be called.* By passing over Ishmael, God showed that there was nothing of saving efficacy in *blood or birth.* Ishmael was the first-born son of Abraham, but he was passed by, for the promise was, "In Isaac shall your seed be called."

8-10. *That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the Word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac.* When there were twins to be born of her.

11-13. *(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls), it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* Here were two children born at the same time, yet Esau was not of the true "seed." It matters not how closely you may be connected with the people of God—unless you have a new heart and a right spirit, yourself, you *still* do not belong to the Covenant seed, for it is not of the flesh that this privilege comes, but God has chosen a *spiritual seed* according to His own good pleasure.

14. *What shall we say, then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!* Paul knew very well that there would always be some who would cry out against this doctrine, that men would say that God was partial and unjust. If he had not foreseen that the declaration of this doctrine would provoke such remarks, he would not have put it so—"What shall we say, then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!"

15, 16. *For He said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.* You know that the modern way of meeting objections to Scripture is to give up everything to the infidel and then say that you have won him—but the true Christian way is to give up *nothing at all*—and if the Truth of God is objectionable, to make it, if possible, still *more objectionable*, to turn the very hardest side it has, right in front of the face of man, and to say, *"This* is God's Truth—refuse it at your peril." I believe that half the attempts to win over unbelievers by toning down the Truths of God have simply been to the dishonoring of the Truths of God and the destruction of the doubter—and that it would always be better to do as the Apostle does here —not to disavow the Truth of God, but to proclaim it as fully, faithfully and plainly as possible. Let us again read what he says here—"Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid! For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy."

17. *For the Scripture says unto Pharaoh.* Paul is now going to show the other side of the same Truth of God—"The Scripture says unto Pharaoh."

17-19. *Even for this same purpose have I raised you up, that I might show My power in you, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore has He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will, He hardens. You will say, then, unto me, Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will?* Paul knew that the doctrine would be objected to on this ground. Evidently he intended to assert something which was open to this objection, which would naturally suggest itself to men—"Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will?"

20-25. *No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He has called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As He says also in Hosea, I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.* See the grand style in which God talks to men? He speaks after a royal fashion—*"I will."* He asks no man's permission for what He will do—"I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved."

26. *And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, You are not My people.* Though He, Himself, had said it,

26. *There shall they be called the children of the living God.* See the splendor of this Divine Sovereignty which shows itself in wondrous, unexpected acts of Grace, selecting and taking to itself those who seem to be self-condemned, and even condemned by Himself, of whom He had said, "You are not My people"?

27-31. *Isaiah also cries concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel are as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: for He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Isaiah said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah. What shall we say, then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith? But Israel, which followed after the Law of righteousness, has not attained to the Law of righteousness?* Does it not seem strange that men who were outwardly sinful, who were utterly ignorant of any way of righteousness and even indifferent to it, have been, by the Grace of God, led to seek righteousness in the right way, namely, by faith in Christ, and they have found it, and God's electing love is seen in them? While others, who seem very sincere and devout as to outward ritual, by following it and it, alone, have missed their way and never found the true righteousness? The Sovereignty of God appears in the choosing of those who follow the way of *faith* and the casting away of those who follow the way of mere outward righteousness. But why did Israel miss the way?

32, 33. *Why? Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the Law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense.* I say again that there have been great attempts made with logical dynamite to blow up this great rock of offense and to clear away every difficulty from the path of the man who wants to be saved by his own method, and to make everything pleasant all around for him. But against this course of action we bear our continual protest, for it is not according to the mind of God, or the teaching of His Word— "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense."

33. *And whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed.* But if they believe not on Him, they *shall,* one day, be ashamed and, meanwhile, the eternal purpose of God shall still stand! He shall still be glorious whatever men shall do, or shall not do!

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

THE EVER-PRESENT CRISIS
NO. 2533

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"You therefore, Beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest you, also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."
2 Peter 3:17.

The Apostle has told us that there will come, in the last days, scoffers. We, therefore, know this is to be the case, for we have been informed concerning it. Forewarned is forearmed and now that we see the scoffers and cannot help seeing them, we perceive another proof of the truth of Scripture. Every time a blasphemer opens his mouth to deny the truth of Revelation, he will help to confirm us in our conviction of the very Truth of God which he denies! The Holy Spirit told us, by the pen of Peter, that it would be so, and now we see how truly he wrote.

I do not think it is of any use to sit down and fret about the badness of the times. Ever since I first understood anything, I have always heard that there has been "a crisis." Somebody or other has continually assured me that we were just on the brink of something perfectly horrible. I have never been quite able to see that the times at any particular period have been very much worse than they used to be. Thirty years ago they seemed to me to be about as bad as they could be—and I could not see any room for their getting much worse! I used to, then, constantly hear laments about "the good old times," and I remember saying that the times, then, were the good old times, for time was never so old before. And, taking all things into account, I thought that, perhaps, the evils of that time were not so very much greater than the evils of the ages that had gone before. Still, I do incline a little to the belief that the times have become worse of late. At any rate, in this matter of scoffers!

The scoffers who used to be in holes and corners have now come out into the open and, worse still, they have climbed into the pulpits! And if not there, actually to scoff, they insinuate doubts and undermine the faith of many who formerly believed. The times are certainly now very perilous, whatever they may have been in the past, and, as we look into the Scriptures, we see that the New Testament, even where it does not take the exact shape of prophecy, nevertheless does give us many indications of what we may expect in human history—and those indications are being verified continually all around us! Seeing we know these things before, we are bound to pay the more earnest heed to the lesson of Peter in the text before us which seems to me to be most suitable to the times in which we live!

There is another matter that ought not to be passed over without much searching of heart and much lamentation—and that is that in all our churches of every sort there is a very dreadful leakage continually going on. It is so with ourselves. We receive large numbers into fellowship, but there are continually large numbers going out from us, not always by sin, but many, of course, by death and emigration and removal. And there is a large proportion of members who drop out of sight, although, at the time of their admission, they gave credible evidence of conversion, according to the judgment of those who watch over men's souls. Look in any of the lists that are published by any religious body—at the column recording the numbers of those who are dropped for non-attendance and so disappear from the church roll—and you must be saddened to see how many are thus lost to us who, at one time, appeared to become good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Because of that sad fact, I thought it all the more necessary that I should speak at this time upon the words in our text—"You therefore, Beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest you, also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

I. First, dear Friends, there is a TITLE here given to all Believers which is well worthy of our careful consideration for a little while. The Apostle says, "You therefore, *Beloved."*

Peter is not the Apostle of Love. We do not expect to find him speaking in such terms as we have in John's Epistles. Yet it is very amazing that the greatest praise of love was written, not by John, but by Paul. And here, Peter, without seeming to go at all out of his way, speaks just as affectionately as John might have spoken. I suppose he felt that when he was administering a rebuke, and when he was warning against a great peril, it was right that he should speak in the most affectionate terms. I do not think that we shall ever do people much good by bullying them. I question whether any receive rebukes at all if they are not administered in love. They only resent them if they are spoken in anger. But when the tone of the reprover is that of affection, then even stripes will be accepted, even as it was with David when he said, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head."

In our text, Peter, very honestly warning those to whom he wrote in plainest terms, calls them, "Beloved." Nor was he using a word which was not true. I do not think that it is always a wise thing to call everybody, "Dear *this*," and, "Dear *that*." In fact, if anybody talks like that to me, I always begin to suspect that there is some motive for such endearing terms. It seems to be the natural course of things that if people say, "Dear *this*," and, "Dear *that*," and, "Dear *the other,"* they think that, possibly, by such talk they can get something out of us and, therefore, they use those unctuous terms without meaning them in their heart. Have we not known people call each other Brother and Sister when all the while they were gossiping one another's character away? It was not so with Peter—he really loved those people to whom he was writing. And it was because he loved them that he wrote so plainly to them and gave them the needed warning so very honestly. Let us, in passing, learn this lesson—

that real affection is a necessary qualification of one who is to be a leader of God's people. Continually to blend this affection with faithfulness is the part of true wisdom, for we shall be cutting and wounding to no good purpose unless we use the lancet with a very tender hand. If we must cut deep, even to the very heart, then it must be done with great tenderness—a lion's heart must be linked to a lady's hand.

Why did the Apostle Peter love these people and call them, "Beloved"? I think we can answer the question by putting ourselves, in our inferior ministry, in a similar position. All those who are converted and brought to Christ are truly beloved by God's people *for Christ's sake.* Wherever we can see anything pertaining to Christ, we wish to give the love that is due to Christ. Where we see that the Holy Spirit has worked the life of God in any Believers, we feel that the life which is in us is in sympathy with the life which is in them. There must be, on the part of a minister of Christ, a deep and intense affection towards all those whom he believes to belong to Christ. Especially is this the case with our own converts—there is a tie of the nearest and most powerful kind which unites us to those who have been brought to the Lord Jesus by our instrumentality. Do they flourish? Then we also flourish. Do they decline? Then our heart languishes. They are our epistles and when they are blotted, we feel that there is a spot upon ourselves. But when they are legible and men read them to the glory of *God,* our soul is full of delight! I trust that we can say of all those whom we have brought to the Savior—and whom we have seen united in the fellowship of the Church—that without using the word unmeaningly, we can call them, "Beloved," And it is because they are beloved that we long to see them "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." We pray the Lord to have them always in His holy keeping, to preserve them from the temptations which are in the world through lust, to deliver them from the power of their own inbred corruptions and make them perfect in every good work, to do His will, working in them that which is well pleasing in His sight.

Workers for Christ, learn the lesson of this title before we pass on to the next part of our subject. Go, in the spirit of love, to deal with those whom you would bless. Love them to Christ if they are unconverted! Bind them to the Cross with cords of love if they are converted. And if, being converted, they have wandered away from their Lord, draw them back "with cords of a man, with bands of love," remembering, yourselves, lest you, also, be tempted to stray from your Savior! There, then, is the title which Peter here uses—"Beloved."

II. The second thing which I notice in the text is, A WATCHWORD given by Peter to those whom he addressed. "You therefore, Beloved, seeing you know these things before, *beware.*"

That word needs to be sounded in the ears of young converts very soon after they come to know the Lord. They are men and women given to appetite and they are very apt to eat whatever is set before them which looks like spiritual meat—and many a disease may be engendered in them by eating unwholesome spiritual food! This warning word, "Beware," needs to be spoken, today, with much earnestness. Beware of many of the books that are given you to read! Beware of much of the teaching that is rife in the present day! Beware of the example of some

who are called Christians! Beware of the deceitful talk of some who would make a gain of you and lead you away from Christ! Beware, above all, of yourself—beware of leaning to your own understanding, beware of giving the reins to your own will, beware of trusting in your own grace and believing that you are beyond the gunshot of the enemy! This is not the best watchword we can give you for your comfort, but it is oftentimes a necessary watchword. Going round the camp at night, we may well whisper in the ear of the sentinel, "Sleep not, but beware!" And waking up the army in the morning, we may well sound the word down the ranks, "Beware!" All day long, all night long, in every place, from every quarter, *beware*, for the world is full of adversaries! Every bush conceals a foe—almost every tuft is at the verge of a rifle-pit. Beware, you are in an enemy's country! You have no right to sleep, or to say, "I am perfectly safe and need not watch." This is the watchword we give you, even as Peter gave it long ago, "Beware."

Be not credulous—"Beware." Remember how the Apostle John says, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Drink not in every novelty, listen not to every new teacher, be not "carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they are in wait to deceive," but, "beware."

Be not too confiding—"Beware." Trust in the Lord with all your heart, but watch against men, for there are some who would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect! They are watching to see how they can deceive you. If they cannot lead you into some great and gross error, they will insinuate doubts and questions. They will leave behind a spark, if they cannot kindle a fire. Just as when Captain Cook went round the world, he landed on every shore and scattered all manner of English seeds broadcast, so there are some who go up and down the land sowing tares among the wheat—and they are never better pleased than when they drop a handful of the evil seed in the mind of some youngster who has but lately come to Christ and who does not, as yet, know the devices of the adversary! "Therefore, Beloved, beware." Be not too confiding, but be always on the watch against evil of all kinds.

Above all, *be not careless,* but, "beware." I know some who have said, "Really, it does not matter what we believe, as long as we are right on the main points." But it *does* matter, for they who neglect any of Christ's Words shall fall by little and little. Every Truth of God is a diamond of untold value! I do not know whether there is such a thing as an unimportant Truth of God. Somewhere or other, near to it, there may lie certain consequences that we know not of and, the Truth of God being neglected, an error may fill its place—and that error may become pregnant with mischief from generation to generation! It is an ill time for the Church of Christ when she begins to walk blindfolded, or when she even desires to neglect any of the precepts or the doctrines which Christ has left behind Him. Moses was to make the tabernacle according to the pattern shown to him in the mount—and Ezekiel was to remind the people of his day of the exact pattern of the house of the Lord—and we need constantly to be put in mind of all that makes up the palace of Truth

where Christ dwells. May we be helped to escape all carelessness by giving heed to this Apostolic watchword!

I pass on the watchword, "Beware," to you, dear Friends, and pray especially that you may beware of the errors of the wicked. There are plenty of them. May you watch both against the errors which are matters of doctrine and the wickedness which is matter of practice! And may you be kept from both of these!

III. Advancing a little further, I want you to notice, thirdly, AN ARGUMENT in our text. There are really two arguments. "You therefore, Beloved, *seeing you know these things before*, beware *lest you, also, fall."*

First, "seeing you know these things before, beware." If you are deceived, you will be culpably, guiltily deceived because you have been warned. If you should be led away from Christ and His Truth, from holy living and holy thinking, you will be led astray willfully because you have already received the intimation that you must watch and pray lest you enter into temptation! Peter here tells you, first, that *there are scoffers*. Then mind that you get out of their way. He tells you, also, that *there are seducers* and that they shall wax worse and worse. Take care that you do not let them seduce you. Of course they will not come to you with the name, "seducer," printed on their foreheads—they will appear to you not as messengers of Satan, but as angels of light—and they will pretend to be very nice, excellent people, when all the while they will be only excellent in doing mischief. And Satan will think well of them because they serve his purpose.

You are warned that *these people will twist the Scriptures*. They are great hands at that evil employment. They assert that *anything* can be taught from the Bible and so it can if a man is only wicked enough to twist it from its proper meaning! There is no book under Heaven that cannot be made to say the exact opposite of what its author intended, if a man is only sufficiently delivered from the power of principle to twist it. Such a man is a thief, for he steals words and uses them for his own wicked purposes when they were meant for quite another end! No doubt he can make any misuse that he likes, even of Holy Writ. But the Scripture as God gave it to us is plain enough—on all the great Truths of God, it is a child's book. There are certain great Truths, undoubtedly, in the Word of God, which are hard to be understood, but even those are not difficult because of the language in which they are proclaimed, but because the Truth, itself, is mysterious and deep. Therefore, dear Friends, if we come honestly to the Scriptures and seek to be taught of the Spirit, we shall learn the things of God. But we must not be surprised if others act dishonestly and twist the Scriptures to their own destruction, for it has been foretold that they will do so. You know this before, therefore, beware! Be on your guard.

Then the second argument is, "Beware lest you, also, fall." As some have turned aside, twisting the Scriptures to their own destruction, you may do the same, for *you are of the same nature as they are*. Say not with Hazael, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Left to ourselves, we are dogs, enough, for anything, Brothers and Sisters! If we are without the Grace of God, neither dogs nor devils are worse than we are! We are quite capable of believing a lie and of clinging to it until

we perish if the Grace of God does not keep us to the Truth and preserve us to the end. Let us never begin to think ourselves exempt from the weaknesses of human intellects, or even from the perversities of human minds. But watch, for with the same nature as other men, *the same danger is around us* as is around other men. And unless God, in His infinite mercy, shall preserve us, we, too, shall apostatize, forsake the faith and become worse than infidels.

IV. Now, in the fourth place, let us briefly notice A CATASTROPHE which is foreshadowed in the text. "Beware lest you, also…fall from your own steadfastness."

Beware lest you fall from your steadfastness *as to belief of the revealed Truth of God.* Beware lest you neglect this truthful doctrine and that, till, at last, you drift into a sea of error. Do not believe what some tell you, that it is of no consequence what we preach, or what you hear. On the contrary, cleave closely to Holy Scripture. Judge everything that we say, or that anyone else says, by the supreme test of the Inspired Word. If I say anything to you merely on my own authority, reject it! But if it is on the authority of God's Word, reject it at your peril! Hold that fast which is really written in this Book and pray that it may be written on your heart by God's Holy Spirit. Be prepared at all times to judge by the Law and by the Testimony, that which you hear, for, if it is not according to this Word, there is no Light of God in it. Take care that you do not depart from the steadfastness of your faith in these Truths of God, for there are some who have not really drunk in any error, yet they do not believe the Truth in the very power of it. They adopt a creed as a mere letter, but what is the use of that? One dead creed on the shelf is as bad as another—we need to know in our own soul the Truth of God *is*. The Truth concerning sin so as to hate it—the Truth concerning the Atonement so as to prize it—the Truth concerning the Deity of Christ so as to rejoice in it!

I cannot stay to mention all the Truths of God in detail, but these and every other Truth are to be laid home to the soul and tested and proved in the daily life. Oh, that none of us may fall from our steadfastness in this matter! As with an iron grip, hold what you hold in these evil times of doubt and unbelief. To my mind, it is a pleasant thing, nowadays, to meet with a person who really believes *anything*. I have found a man up to his neck in error and yet holding firmly some one Truth of God. I have said to him, "Sit down, my Friend, and let us have a talk, for you believe something, and so do I, and so far we can get on together." But it is different where there is nothing at all believed, where it is, "Whichever you please, you pay your money and you take your choice." We are told that we must "keep abreast of the times." And, "truth is always advancing." If it is so, then one thing was true in the year 1800, and another in the year 1830, and a different thing was true in the year 1840, another in 1860, another in 1880—and we are going on to a new truth for 1900! Some seem to think that the Truth of God changes like the moon, or like the weather! In their opinion, it is never at one stay, but ebbs and flows like the troubled sea when it cannot rest! But we believe in the Truth of God that never alters and never can be altered, but stands Immutable as God, Himself! May we be kept steadfast in our belief of that!

And, dear Friends, it is a painful thing when men are *not steadfast in their practice*. Of all the griefs the Church ever feels, the keenest is when those who once stood in her midst dishonor the name of Christ by unholy living. Are there not many such? They did run well, but what has hindered them that they do not still obey the Truth? Once they were regularly at the Prayer Meetings. Once, they were among the most earnest Sunday school teachers and Christian workers, but where are they now? Eaten up with worldliness, honeycombed with the desire after amusements that are, at least, questionable, their spiritual life is reduced to the lowest ebb, and even their morals begin to be very doubtful. God save you, beloved Friends, from such a catastrophe as that! We cannot live too near to Christ—the very marrow of religion lies in that which some men think to be the too great precision of it. I am certain that the full enjoyment of true religion does not belong to the great mass of Christian professors—they do not get near enough to the center and heart of it all to realize what its sweetness is. They do not sufficiently consecrate themselves to their Lord and Master, or live in such complete fellowship with Him as to really get at the marrow and fatness which are stored up in the central regions of true godliness. The Lord help us to get there, and when we *do* get there, may He keep us in that blissful spot!

And, oh, to be *steadfast in our labors for Christ*—not diligent, today, and sluggish tomorrow! Let us always be like the racer who is intent on reaching the goal, pressing forward as though he could not go fast enough to win the prize—so let us always be panting to do more for the glory of God. We have many professors who are like runners that are short-winded—they could win a sharp, short race, but they cannot hold on through life—and who among us could do so unless the Lord should hold us up? This is the point of Peter's warning, let us see that we fall not from our steadfastness of Christian progress, but always be as if we were arrows shot from the bow of the Eternal that must speed onward till we reach the target of perfection! Beware, therefore, lest you fall from your steadfastness, for that would be, indeed, a terrible catastrophe.

V. And now, fifthly, just for a minute, notice that here is A WARNING. "Beware lest you, also, *being led away with the error of the wicked, fall* from your own steadfastness."

A man does not usually go bad all of a sudden. "Oh," says one," there is So-and-So, who was with us a little while ago, but he has gone into gross sin." Just so, but long before there were any outward signs of evil, there was the undermining going on in his character, depend upon it. When men fall, it is often the case that they have been "led away." Somebody gets hold of your ear and leads you away. Some get a hold on your empty pockets and lead you away because of your needs. Some get hold of your eyes and lead you away by your eyelids. There are many points where a man may be grasped by one who is seeking to destroy him, but, dear Friends, I beg you not to be easily led away by anybody! Know what you know for yourselves—do your own thinking! When you want to find the Truth of God, work your passage to it—study the Scriptures for yourselves, always seeking the instruction of the Holy Spirit—and then, if you are led, do not be "led away." It would take a great deal to lead me away

from what I know, from that Refuge wherein I have hidden, from that Rock whereon I have built for time and for eternity. My Lord—

"To whom or where could I go,
If I should turn from You?"

If you are led away, dear Friends, do *not be led away by error.* If somebody can teach you more than you now know, and it is really God's Truth, go and learn it. If there is an upper room at the feast and the King says to you, "Come up higher," go up higher by all means! We do not want you at the lower end of the table if there is better fare at the higher end of it. But do not let men lead you away with error, especially when it is "the error of the wicked"—and you can soon determine that. I will tell you how you can detect men who would lead you away with the error of the wicked. You can always be sure that those who would make you think *lightly of the Scriptures* are leading you away with the error of the wicked! He is no good man who thinks little of the best of books—the Book of God! I will have nothing to do with that man who makes me think less of the Word of God than I used to think! I know at once where he comes from and understand what his objective is—if possible, to lead me away with the error of the wicked! Have nothing to do with any man who would make you think less of Christ than you do! His error must be the error of the wicked!

If he begins to point out to you some defect in Christ's teaching, or some fault in His life, or tells you that He is not very God of very God, get out of his society at once! I would have you do what John is said to have done with Cerinthus who denied the Deity of Christ. John was in a bath, to which the unbeliever came, and it is said that John hurried out at once, for fear that he should be contaminated by contact with Cerinthus, or lest the bath should fall on them both! Something of that kind of spirit the most loving followers of Christ will be sure to have. You can be sure of this, that he will do you no good who does not honor your Lord and Master, so get out of his company as soon as you can.

And shun also those people who would make you think less of prayer, for they would lead you away with the error of the wicked. You know how some of them talk, "No doubt it is a very proper thing for people to pray. It does them good and relieves their mind, but to suppose that God hears prayer and answers it is positively ridiculous!" Yet for all that, they say that they would not discourage us from praying. Now, personally, I feel inclined to say to a man who tells me that, "My dear Sir, you have as good as called me an idiot, and I am very much obliged to you for the compliment." "No," he says, "I did not call you an idiot." But I am an idiot if I go on praying when I know that God does not hear me! I say that a man is a natural fool who, believing that God never hears and answers prayer, yet goes and kneels down to pray. Why, he might as well go to the top of a hill and whistle to the winds! Surely, if there is no effect produced by prayer, it is idle to say that it will do us good to pray! We are not so foolish as to believe that! When we get to that state of mind, we hope to be taken in at Earlswood or at Bethlehem. But we have not come to that condition just yet and, when any speak ill of prayer, we understand that they do not know even the elements of true religion! If a person were to say to me, "I will teach you to read," and he began by saying

of the first letters of the alphabet, "That is not A, and that is not B," I would say, "Oh, thank you, I will not trouble you any longer. I knew better than that when I was quite a little boy!"

That man, again, who begins to speak lightly of sin, will lead you away with the error of the wicked. You know how he talks, "Do not listen to those old-fashioned Puritan notions! You can go and mix in society, you can indulge in this and that amusement and yet you can be a Christian all the same." Ah, yes! I constantly see persons trying to see not how *near* they can live to God, but how far they can live *from* God and yet be called Christians! There are some who seem to be inculcating on our youth this kind of doctrine. Do not keep away from temptation, but go into temptation. Do not burn yourself, but just singe your hair. Do not, by any means, actually kill yourself in the machinery, but get a finger cut off every now and then—then you will know something of the nature of steel and of how it operates when it cuts through a bone. That is very instructive, no doubt!

This is the typical of the talk that we hear from many in this evil age, "Of course you must know a little about life. Young people are not to be always tied to their mother's apron strings—they must go out and learn a little for themselves." That is, drink a little poison every now and then just to see how it operates on you. Take a drop of acid and see what it will do for you. My advice is—Keep clear of all such things! Let this warning be always remembered, "Beware, beware, beware." I have never yet come under a rule of life that seemed to me too severe. On the contrary, I still find myself all too apt to wander in thought, if not in act, and I would be glad if I could not only be bound, but nailed right up to the Cross.

"Oh," says one, "what do you mean by *that* expression?" I mean that I wish I could realize the truth of Paul's words, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me." I would gladly have no liberty to do *anything* that is even questionable! I would find my liberty in being perfectly holy. Oh, that God would help each one of us to reach that point! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 PETER 3.

Verse 1. *This second epistle, Beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.* The purest minds need stirring up at times. It would be a great pity to stir up impure minds. That would only be to do mischief. But pure minds may be stirred as much as you please and the more the better! There are hallowed memories in the minds of all Christians, but those memories are apt to lie asleep—it is well to ring the alarm bell and wake up all the memories within the Believer's heart, even as Peter did when he wrote—"I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance."

2. *That you may be mindful of the Words which were spoken before by the holy Prophets, and of the commandment of us, the Apostles of the Lord and Savior.* Peter believed in the Inspiration of the very "Words" of Scripture. He was not one of those precious "advanced thinkers" who would, if

they could, tear the very soul out of the Book and leave us nothing at all. He wrote, "That you may be mindful of the Words"—the very Words—"which were spoken before by the holy Prophets." "Oh," says one, "but words do not mean anything—it is the *inward sense* that is really important." Exactly so—that is just what the fool said about eggshells. He said that they did not matter—it was only the inward life-germ of the chick within that was important! So he broke all the shells and, thereby, destroyed the life that was within! We contend for *every* Word of the Bible and believe in the verbal and plenary Inspiration of Holy Scripture, believing, indeed, that there can be no other Inspiration but that. If the Words could be taken from us, the sense, itself, would be gone.

3. *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers.* A prophecy which has been abundantly fulfilled! You need not go far to find them—they come in the form of living men—and they swarm in the form of their books. They are to be met with almost everywhere! Like the locusts, they fill the air and hide the light of the sun! "There shall come in the last days scoffers."

3. *Walking after their own lusts.* Errors of doctrine are almost always attended with errors of practice and, certainly, they legitimately lead that way. Those who scoff according to the lusts of their intellect are very likely to live according to the lusts of their flesh! The two things are congruous. They are born from the same cause, they flourish for the same reasons, and they tend to the same ends! "Walking after their own lusts."

4. *And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.* Only the modern scoffers have tried to improve upon their predecessors, for they say, "All things have developed by evolution from the beginning, which never had a beginning, but which somehow or other has always existed." Thus the scoffers change their tune, but they never alter their spirit—it is always an attack upon the revealed Truth of God! Indeed, they scarcely seem to believe that there *is* any revealed Truth, and they will only accept that which they might, themselves, have invented! Notwithstanding what these men say, all things have not continued as they were since the beginning of the creation, for there have been great interpositions of Divine power in the past, as Peter goes on to show.

5-7. *For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men.* Admire the power of God's Word! It was by the Word of God that the heavens were made, by the Word of God that the earth was drowned, by the Word of God that it has been preserved ever since—and will be preserved until, by that same Word, fire shall come to devour all the works of men. As surely as Noah's flood came, so surely shall there be a burning up at the appointed season. "The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire."

8. *But, Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.* You are in a hurry. You do not understand the infinite leisure of the Eternal One. The wondrous system of Divine Grace seems to have hardly room and scope enough in the few years that men give to it by their prophetic calculations! But God's prophecies are being fulfilled to the very letter. It may be that the length of time for their accomplishment will be far greater than any have imagined, yet to God it shall still be a very little while. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." We cry, "How long? How long?" Yet, according to God's reckoning, it is but the day before yesterday that Christ died, and only about a week ago that Adam was expelled from Eden. A thousand years is, after all, a very brief space of time. If it is measured by *our* life, it seems long. But what is the life of a man? Measured other ways—and there are many other modes of measurement—it grows even longer. But measured by the eternity of God, it is a vanishing point altogether—there seems to be nothing left of it.

9. *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* So He hurries not. He gives the sinner space and time enough in which to repent. Oh, that man would turn to God, moved by that gracious long-suffering of His!

10. *But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.* It is impossible to tell when it will come, but the Day of the Lord *will* come and, to the great mass of mankind it will come as a thief in the night. Though often warned, they will not expect it. The Lord's saints will watch for Him, for they are not in ignorance that that Day should overtake them as a thief. But, to the ungodly, the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night."

10. *In the which 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.* Men make great boasts concerning what they build and there are many wonderful works of men upon the face of the globe. But the day will come when there will be no trace of them left, for they will have utterly disappeared! Why, then, should you and I live for these things—for the things which are seen, which are temporal? O Beloved, live for the things which are *not seen*, which are *eternal!*

11. *Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness.* These are garments which we should wear in prospect of eternity! These are things which no fire can touch, for holiness and godliness will outlive even the flames of the Last Great Day!

12, 13. *Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the Day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.* We believe that God will, in the end, have a complete victory over sin, and that even this poor world of ours, purified by the fire, shall be lifted up,

in a sevenfold splendor, to be a part of the great Kingdom of our God. "New heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness."

14. *Therefore, Beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.* Be diligent to get rid of all those spots which sin has made. In one sense, you are cleansed from them, already, but in another sense, the purifying work must constantly go on. You are to overcome your besetting sin—you are to vanquish all your tendencies to evil—every thought is to be brought into captivity to the mind of the Lord.

15, 16. *And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul, also, according to the wisdom given unto him, has written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, twist, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.* If Peter, here, alluded to the Doctrine of Election, and the great doctrines that spring out of predestination, that is no argument why they should not be preached, for if they are not to be preached because men twist them, then *nothing* is to be preached, seeing that we are here told that they also twist other Scriptures unto their own destruction! Any rope will do for a man to hang himself with—and any doctrine will surface for a man to ruin himself with if he wishes to do so. The doctrine of Divine Mercy has been twisted into a reason why we should live in sin! The doctrine of Human Capability has been twisted into this falsehood—"I can repent when I like, or believe when I like and, therefore, I may leave it to the very last." There is no form of opinion which cannot be rendered mischievous! Our business is to study the Word of God and preach it as we find it—and if men will twist it, we cannot help that. Is it not so that the Truth of God will always be a savor of life unto life to those who believe—and a savor of death unto death to those who perish?

17, 18. *You therefore, Beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest you, also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in Grace.* The only way to prevent falling is to grow—the tree that grows will not fall over!

18. *And in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen.* An ascription of praise to Christ is never out of place at the beginning or at the end of an Epistle, or in the middle of it! You may praise the Lord Jesus Christ anywhere, at any time—it shall never be a waste of time to sing unto His name! "To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."

HYMNS FROM—"OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—384, 668, 670.

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

THE GREATEST GIFT IN TIME OR ETERNITY
NO. 2534

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 20, 1884.

"Behold, I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people. 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. Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near."
Isaiah 55:4-6.

We are met together with two objectives. First, there is the preacher's objective, that is, to set forth and to proclaim the blessings of the Covenant of Grace. It is my duty and it is my delight to stand here and cry, "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." Then, there is the objective of the hearers—oh, that everyone here were heartily in pursuit of it! No, what is even better, I would that everyone here might *attain* this objective, for it is that you may feed upon the blessed Covenant provisions mentioned in our text. If there is water, my Brothers and Sisters, let us drink it! If there is wine and milk, let us be satisfied with it. Let us pray that every soul in this place may even now delight itself in fatness!

You who have already partaken of the provisions of the Covenant, receive them again! Come once more to the table which the Lord's Grace has so richly spread. You have a daily hunger—let that hunger be again appeased. Your appetite grows if you are in good spiritual health—come, then, and let the appetite be again satisfied! If you do, it will grow again, and again you will want still more of the same heavenly food, for you will still hunger—blessedly hunger—after the royal dainties which the Lord has so bountifully provided for you! And oh, that some here, who have never feasted on the luxuries of true godliness, might get a taste of them while I am talking about them! It is my design to speak very plainly—not to try to say anything of my own, but just to set forth the Master's words, explaining them and making them as clear as I can, that all who run may read, and yet speaking of them so earnestly that those who read may straightway run!

Why do we come to our places of worship? What is the objective of our Sunday gatherings? Surely not merely to hear a man talk and then to go

away and ourselves talk about that talk! But this is a place of heavenly business where something real is to be done! Where men are to be lifted into a higher life and where those who as yet have not been quickened may come and receive that life! I pray that some may receive it this very hour! Time is flying. Death is near. Eternity is close at hand. It is time that we should be in earnest about these things if we have trifled up to now! It is time that we should come to a right and wise decision and partake of what God has so graciously provided! Without any further preface, I bid you notice that the three verses of my text speak of *a Divine gift, a Divine promise* and *a Divine exhortation.* These will be the three divisions of my subject.

I. First, here is A DIVINE GIFT—"Behold, I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people." We are not now talking about payments or about what people deserve—the Gospel and all that it brings must be regarded as a *gift.* Men rightly say that there is nothing freer than a gift and, truly, there is nothing freer than the free gift of God! What is that Divine gift of which our text speaks?

Well, first, the *Father has given His Son.* The words I have just spoken are very simple, but there is an infinite meaning in them. So great is sin, so tremendous is evil as to be unfathomable. So great is the ruin which sin has brought upon us that it is truly indescribable! And equally great, yes, even greater is the Remedy for the evil! He who made all things and who fills all things, willed not that we should perish and, therefore, He must give a redemption price to ransom us out of bondage. He must provide a Sacrifice to take away our guilt and, to do this, He gave His Son. He had but one, His Well-Beloved, equal with Himself, and One with Himself in all things. Yet He gave us His Son! What if I say He gave us Himself? That is also true, for there is such a mysterious Unity between the Father and the Son that, in giving the Son, the Father gave us Himself! Oh, listen, then, you who are lost in sin, and seem to be helpless! Must there not be hope for you when such a gift as this is given? Not simply, mark you, a gift of Grace, or a gift of love, or a gift of power, but the gift of the Godhead's own Self, the gift of all there is in Him of whom we read, It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." "Behold," says the Father, "I have given Him."

When Isaiah wrote those words, they could not be read quite as clearly as you and I can read them, for now, holding up this Scripture to the light of the Cross, and reading it by the lamps of those five wounds, I can see a marvelous meaning in it—"I have given Him." Yes, the Father has given a Redemption for the bond-slave! He has given a Sacrifice for the guilty! He has given His Son! The words in which I speak of this great fact are very simple and they may seem very poverty-stricken, but the Truth of God, itself, is such as made the angels stand in amazement! All Heaven was bewildered with wonder that God, the Infinite, should give His Son for poor, sinful, dying worms like ourselves! It seemed too much to give—the infinitely-holy God to die for guilty sinners! The everlasting

and eternal Son of God to suffer that His feeble, finite creatures might not perish!

And if it is a wonder that God the Father should give His Son, it is an equal wonder that *the Son consented to be given.* The Father said, "I have given Him," yet it is equally true of the Son, "He loved me, and *gave Himself* for me." The Father's gift was no violation of the will of the Son, but the Son said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart." Oh, to think that Jesus should give Himself for you and for me! To take our nature, to descend from Heaven to the manger was a great stoop—but to take our sin, to come down from the Throne of Glory to the Cross of Calvary was a still greater proof of His condescending love!

Oh, think of this, Beloved! He so completely gave Himself that He gave to us His Deity and His Humanity—His soul and His body, His life and His death—and though He is now risen from the dead, He still gives Himself to us, for He has never recalled the gift He once bestowed! And this is the very glory of His gift—that He is still ours by a constant gift of Himself to us! Clutch at this blessed Truth of God, you despairing ones! God has given His Son and the Son has given Himself and if, by an act of faith, you trust Him, He is at once yours! And He is yours forever. What more can you possibly need?

In this fourth verse, we also have *the purposes of this gift avowed.* "I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people." First, Christ is given for a *Witness.* What does that mean?

Surely, Christ is given, first, to show us what God is. If you want to know what God is, study the life of Christ, for Jesus said, "He that has seen Me, has seen the Father." In Christ, the Godhead shines, as it were, through a merciful medium, so that the excessive Glory of the Deity is toned down to meet the weakness of our poor minds, lest we should be blinded by the ineffable splendor! God in human flesh is a Witness to human flesh of what God is.

Next, Christ is a Witness in this sense—that He bears His testimony to us concerning the Father's will, the Father's love and the Father's Grace. He declares what He has seen in secret of the Father's purposes of mercy, so that what He testifies, He speaks not of Himself, but what He has seen with the Father, that He declares unto us. He is the Witness of what God is and of what God has done for us. His name is put to the Everlasting Covenant in many ways—as the Surety of it, and as a Partner in it, but also as a Witness to it. He bears witness to us that in His Person, God has entered into covenant with men, saying to them, "Inasmuch as you have broken the first Covenant of Works and now cannot possibly keep it, I have made another and a better Covenant. Christ has undertaken to magnify My Law and to satisfy My Justice. And I have undertaken to save all those whom I have given to Him." And Jesus bears witness that it is so! He is, Himself, the Pledge and Seal of the Covenant! I am so glad that I have not to talk with an invisible, impalpable God who has never been seen of man—it seems too much for one, veiled in human

flesh, to be able to speak with the unseen Jehovah, the God who is a Spirit! But I *can* speak to the Man, Christ Jesus. I feel now that I have Mediator, one of a thousand, who can lay His hands upon both parties to the Covenant because He belongs to both of us, and is both God and Man. My heart rejoices as I behold God in human flesh, the Witness for God to the people! O poor Sinners, be glad, be glad! God has given His dear Son to bear witness to you that He wills that you should be saved, that He is able to save you without a violation of His Justice, that He is willing to save you, and willing to save you now, if you will but trust His Son!

Our text also tells us that the Father gives Christ, not only as a Witness, but as *a Leader and a Commander.* That is just what we need! Men in any country where they are greatly oppressed, sigh for a leader. "Grant a leader bold and brave," is the prayer that has gone up from many a down-trodden nation. Well, the Lord has appointed His Son to be a Leader and a Commander, and if we will but yield to Him, to be led by Him, to be commanded by Him, He will lead us safely. He will lead us on to victory and to conquest—and Heaven, itself, shall be ours in due time! He who puts himself under this Leader shall go forth conquering and to conquer. He shall war against his sin and win the day. He shall fight against the devil and overcome him by the blood of the Lamb! He shall do battle with Death, itself, and be more than a conqueror over the last enemy! I would to God that as I speak some of you would say, "Christ is given as a Leader and a Commander, therefore we will enlist beneath His banner. Henceforth, the Son of David, the Son of God, shall be both Leader and Commander to us." Happy, happy, happy day for you and for all of whom that shall be true!

Now notice who are *the persons thus favored.* To whom is the Lord Jesus given as a Witness and a Leader and Commander? Twice we are told that it is to the people—"A Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people." I have known some people sneer at "the common people." Ah, yes, but it was the common people who gladly heard Christ, and it is for the people that He died! "I," says God, "have exalted One chosen out of the people." The Lord Jesus Christ is the Christ of common people! If any of you are so high and mighty that you must go to Heaven fashionably, you will be lost! The unfashionable way to Heaven, by trusting in Jesus Christ, is the *only* way that will take you there. He is the people's Witness, the people's Leader, the people's Commander!

That means, does it not, that He is the Leader and Commander of a great host, not merely of a select few? Perhaps you have read about us poor Calvinists—what a wretched, miserable sect we are—how we are always trying to keep salvation to ourselves and how we believe that only a very few will ever be saved! Put all that down among the lies that our enemies tell about us! It is not true and it never was true, for there are no people under Heaven who are more anxious that all men should be saved than are we who believe that, nevertheless, the Lord has a people whom He will save. Our hearts, we trust, are full of love to men, despite

all that is said about us. It is my hope that the Lord Jesus Christ will save so many, that at the last, those who are lost will bear no greater proportion to the whole mass of mankind than do the persons in prison to the multitudes that are outside of it in any well-ordered state!

"There will have to be a great change," says somebody, "to bring *that* about." Yes, there *will be* a great change! There are glorious times yet coming, notwithstanding all that tends to the contrary! There is a day to dawn when the Lord Jesus shall be acknowledged as King of Kings and Lord of Lords and, "He shall reign forever and ever"—and the overwhelming multitudes of His redeemed shall prove that He is not the Witness and Leader and Commander to a miserable few, a mere handful—but that He is Witness and Leader and Commander to the people! In all things He shall have the pre-eminence.

"To the people." Then, surely, that means all sorts of people? It does. Our Lord is a Leader and Commander to all classes and conditions of men! Kings may follow Him if they will. And peasants and paupers *do* follow Him in great multitudes! He is willing to receive the lost and the low, the poorest of the poor. He is willing to lift up the most sunken. "Whoever will," He says, "let Him take the water of life freely." He is a Leader and a Commander to the people! Then follow Him, my Friend, obey Him! You never thought of doing so, before, but may God's Grace move you to say, "If He is a Leader and Commander to the people, I am one of them, and I will go with Him. He shall be my Leader and my Commander." If it is really so with you, Heaven shall be yours! Christ will bring you to Heaven and you shall bring glory to His name forever and ever as you bless and praise Him who has saved you by His Grace!

So much, then, upon the Divine Gift—God has given His own Son to be a Savior to men, and Christ has given Himself to be a Witness, and Leader, and Commander! Oh, that none of us may refuse Him, but may all accept Him as God's Gift to us!

II. The second thing in our text is A DIVINE PROMISE made to this Leader and Commander.

It is, first, a promise *to call those whom He does not know.* "Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not." That must be a strange nation, must it not, which Christ does not know? There will be people at the last to whom Christ will say, "I never knew you." And there are such people, now, whom Christ has never known in this sense. He never spoke with them, He never heard their voice in prayer, He never heard their hearts cry to Him, He never had anything to do with them. He never knew them by mutual acquaintance. And there are nations of this kind of people. I might almost say that there is a nation of this sort in London whom Christ does not know—millions with whom He has had no dealings at all! They never come near His courts, they do not recognize His day, they scarcely even know His name. What a promise this is to Christ—"You shall call a nation that You know not!" The people are so far sunk in sin that it seems as if Christ, Himself, never knew them!

Did you ever cross the threshold of a house—or if not of a whole house, perhaps of one room—where there was a number of persons herded together in poverty and misery? Drunkenness was there, vice was there, filth was there. Perhaps you were the first visitor who ever went there upon an errand of mercy and you said to yourself, "What a dreadful place this is! Surely, the blessed Savior has never been here, there is no trace of His footprints here." I think it is a most blessed thing that the Father should say to Christ, "You shall call this sort of people." Such degraded and sinful men and women as these are yet to be called and yet to be saved! Oh, be of good courage, you who try to labor in the very worst parts of London—or, for that matter, in the worst parts of Africa, or wherever you may go! The people may seem to be so far gone in sin and degradation that even the great Lover of Souls does not know them, yet the promise is that He shall call them—and call them effectually—and they shall come unto Him!

The next part of the promise declares that Christ is to *make run those who do not know Him*—"and nations that knew not You shall run unto You." People who did not know anything about Christ and who did not want to know about Him, shall, all of a sudden, hear of Him, and they shall run to Him! I have often noticed that when such people do come to Christ, they always *run* to Him. I hope that some of you who have been hearing me for many years, will yet come to Christ though you have long stayed away from Him. And if you do, it will be, with you, pretty much as it was with the snail that got into the ark! I think he must have started very early to be able to get in before the door was shut, for he traveled so slowly. And you hearers of the Gospel who have grown accustomed to it, are as slow in coming to Christ as some boys are when they are going to school. But when a man has never heard the Gospel and, at last, somebody has induced him to come in and sit in the aisle, or in a back seat, it is all so new to him that he begins talking to himself about it. "Christ died for the guilty? I have only to trust Him and my sins shall be pardoned, and I shall be saved?" He jumps at the idea! It is the very thing he needs and he grasps it at once! He is saved in a moment and he rejoices with a joy unspeakable in the Christ whom he has found in the space of half-an-hour—while others have for years been hearing in vain the glad tidings of salvation! "Nations that knew not You shall run unto You."

Do you notice how God talks here? He speaks like a God! Who is this that says, "They *shall*"? someone asks. "Man has a free will, has he not?" Yes, and God has a free will, too, and when these two come into conflict, it is *God's* free will that wins the day! Man will do what God wills that man shall do—the will of the Eternal shall get the victory over the poor transient human will! When I come to preach in this pulpit, I do not say to myself, "Perhaps somebody will make himself willing to be saved." No, but I think to myself, "I shall have a picked congregation to listen to my Master's message. The Lord will pick them out and bring the right people to hear His Word and, when I preach it, His Word shall not return unto Him void. Those whom He has determined to bless shall be blessed,

whatever the devil may try to do to the contrary. God will have His way and storm their hearts and carry all before Him." "Well, but," asks someone, "you *do* believe in man's free will, don't you?" Yes, I do. As much as you do and perhaps more! But I also believe in God's eternal purpose and in God's all-conquering will, so that, without violating the will of man, He can still have His own way and He can make this promise true to Christ, "Nations that knew not You shall run unto You because of the LORD Your God."

Now, lastly on this point, here is a Divine promise *to exert an amazing motive power.* What is it that makes people run to Christ? The text tells us, "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." A glorified Christ makes men run to Him! When Christ is glorified in your hearts, dear Friends, you will run to Him! The Son of God, to whom you have been an enemy, nevertheless, out of mighty love, came here, lived, labored and died, giving His whole life away that the ungodly might be saved through Him. Not to gain anything for Himself, but out of sheer pity and abounding love, He passed under His Father's rod. He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. He suffered anguish even unto death for men's redemption. And it was the Son of God who did this—God over all blessed forever! Having died, He was buried. He rose again and now all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth—"Therefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." He can save the drunk, the swearer, the profligate, the 80 year-old sinner steeped up to his neck in filthiness and vice! He is able, with a word, to deliver the most corrupt from the power of sin! He can make the most abandoned pure and chaste, and clean. Through His precious blood, He can save them from all the guilt of their sin and all the power of their sin, and all the penalty of their sin! Yes, and ultimately, from the very existence of their sin, so that even those who were all black from head to foot shall be "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Oh, that the Holy Spirit would, with one glorious ray, light up the Cross till you could all see it! Oh, for one beam of light to let the sin-bitten see the bronze serpent lifted high! There is life in a look at Christ!

O Friends, I wish that you would all believe this as I say it, for I would say it not only with my lips, but with my heart! It is the best news that mortals did ever tell. Yes, even angels from their glory never descended to earth with a message so sweet as this—Christ is lifted high to be a great Savior of great sinners! Help is laid upon One who is mighty! He sits upon the Throne of God above that He may reign over sinners! He holds the scepter of all worlds that He may stretch it out in mercy towards the guiltiest of the guilty! Only trust Him, fall at His feet in penitence, confess your transgression, ask to be delivered from it, for this is God's promise to His Son—that you and such as you shall come to Him and, coming to Him, shall be drawn by the fact that He is such a glorious Christ, so every way adapted to your need! God give us Grace to rightly

set forth a glorified Christ! Then shall we soon have saved sinners who have been made to run to Him!

III. And now, finally, the last verse of the text furnishes A DIVINE EXHORTATION. "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near."

Notice the connection between verses five and six—"Nations that knew not You shall run unto You." There is the absolute, unconditional promise. And then the very next verse says, "Seek you the Lord while He maybe found." There is the unlimited exhortation to men, so that *an exhortation to men is not inconsistent with the strongest Doctrine of Grace,* Yes, more, *the decree of God in no sense renders the effort of man unnecessary.* "Nations shall run unto You," says the Father to His Son. And when He has said that, He turns round to the nations and He says to them, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near." Salvation is free and it is the gift of God's Grace, but oh, my Hearer, *you must seek it, you must call upon God for it* and I would, in God's name, stir you up to seek Him and call upon Him now! Before you go to your bed, seek Him who is ready to be found! Call upon Him who is waiting to hear!

Notice that there is put here *a plea of a very encouraging kind*—"*Seek* you the Lord *while He may be found,"* that is the Gospel day! "Call you upon Him *while He is near,"* that is Mercy's day. I believe that in such a congregation as this, when the Gospel is being earnestly preached, there is a kind of propitious interval allowed to men. There is in Grace, as well as in the matter of making a fortune, a "tide" which must be "taken at the flood," and I think that there is a flood-tide just now for some of you! Listen to the music of the waters—"He may be found." It is not true that Christ has gone away and shut the door of Mercy—"He may be found!" "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him!" He is not far off! He has not gone away, shut the door behind Him and declared that He will never hear prayer again—"Call you upon Him while He is near!" He is very near you just now! He is pleading with you! He has been blessing your neighbor! He has, by His Grace, called one who sits in the same pew with you! "Call you upon Him while He is near!"

There is also *a warning,* as well as an encouragement, in these words, "While He is near." While Mercy's sun has not yet set. While yet the 12 hours of the day are not all counted out—I mean, the day of the Lord's long-suffering mercy—seek Him, I pray you, for there is a day coming when you shall seek in vain! There is a day coming when you shall knock in vain—when once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door. That is clearly implied in our text, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found." There will come a time when He *cannot* be found—I do not believe such a time is ever reached in this life or, if so, very rarely—but this life is very frail and may end at any moment. Therefore, while it lasts, seek the Lord. For when this life is once over, you can never find Him.

I, at least, will have no complicity in that atrocious treason against God's Word which leads men to believe that they may, perhaps, seek and

find Him in another state. I believe that of all lies that were ever preached, this is the most dangerous and likely to do the most hurt to men's souls! It is very popular, I know, but what do I care about that? God's servant is not to preach smooth things, but true things! It is this which we have to preach and we dare not go an inch beyond it—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not"—shall have another chance in a future state? Not so said the lips of perfect Love and Mercy—the lips of Christ, Himself! He said, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not *shall be damned."*

There it stands in His Word and there is nothing after it! There is no hope—smaller or "larger"—offered to any man who believes not in the Lord Jesus Christ! Reject the Son of God and what hope can there be for you? "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" God Incarnate bleeds and dies and yet you will not be saved by Him? Then what can become of you? What must await you but "a certain fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation"? He who will not have God, Himself, to save him has deliberately committed spiritual suicide—and on his own head must be his blood! Therefore, I pray you, heed the message of the text, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near."

Make sure work of it and do it at once! Trust Jesus! Trust Him wholly! Trust Him fully! Leave your sin, leave your self-righteousness, quit it all! Give yourself up to Christ to be made holy, to be taught to do His will and to be His servant all your days! Then, blessed be His name, He will save you, for God gave Him on purpose that He might do so, and He will, and the will of the Lord shall be done in you! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 53; 55:1-7.

Isaiah 53:1. *Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* It is no new thing for Gospel ministers to be disappointed. Even Isaiah, the most evangelical of all the Prophets, who might well be placed at the head of the College of Preachers, feels compelled to say, in the name of all that sacred brotherhood, "Who has believed our report?" The report was a very plain one, a very earnest one and full of noble matter. Men ought to have believed it, but they did not, and they never will unless God's arm is revealed, for faith is the product of Omnipotence— and men never believe in Christ till God stretches out His arm! Where was the difficulty of believing the report about Christ? Isaiah tells us about Him and, as we listen, we understand why so many believe not on Him.

2. *For He shall grow up before Him*—That is, the Messiah shall grow up before God—

2. *As a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we*

should desire Him. When Christ came, He was very lovely to those who could judge of spiritual beauty. In form and comeliness, He was unrivalled, but not to carnal men! They said, "Where is His royal splendor? Where is the majesty of His Kingdom?" As they looked upon the carpenter's Son, they said, "Where are His riches?" They heard Him say that He had no where to lay His head and they despised such a Messiah! As He spoke in simple parables to the people, they asked, "Where is His wisdom?" So, to carnal eyes, the Savior had "no form nor comeliness."

3. *He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.* Oh, how sad it is that the Son of the Most High God, when He condescended to wear our nature, received such base treatment as this from the hands of men! How equally sad is it that His glorious and ever-blessed Gospel should still be the object of contempt to multitudes of men! They will not have it! They will have their own philosophy—rather their own *lies*, let us say—but Christ they despise and they esteem not His Gospel.

4. *Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.* Listen, you sad ones, you sorrowful ones! Let this sweet note charm you into joy—"He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."

4. *Yet we.* We, for whom He was the Substitute, for whom He smarted—"Yet we"—

4, 5. *Did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But 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.* Wonderful medicine! Marvelous healing! Where shall we find the like? The Physician drinks the bitter draught and so cures the patient! Who ever heard of such a wonder as this? The Physician is put to death and that great Sacrifice heals the patient! Who ever heard of such a thing as this? The whole Gospel, in a nutshell, lies in this verse—"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." Now comes another wonderful verse, such as Luther was accustomed to call "a little Bible." It begins with, "all," and it ends with, "all."

6. *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.* There is your only hope of eternal life, Sinner! You are among the, "all," who went astray. If you are a Believer in Christ, you will be found among the, "all," whose iniquities were laid upon Him and carried away by Him.

7. *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.* Oh, the majesty of His silence! Never was eloquence equal to this—"He opened not His mouth."

8. *He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken.* They ought to have been

stricken—their transgressions deserved the heavy blows of the rod of God's wrath! Yet, "for the transgression of My people was He stricken."

9. *And He made His grave with the wicked.*—He was crucified between two malefactors.

9. *And with the rich in His death.* He was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

9. *Because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.* For that very reason He was qualified to bear our sin! Because He had no sin of His own, therefore He could bear ours, and He did bear ours, and died, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

10. *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief: when You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands.* Do not be afraid, then, about the Kingdom of Christ. Its interests are safe enough, for they are in His hands, and God has given the promise that His pleasure shall prosper there.

11. *He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.* His death-pangs were our birth-pangs and Christ shall see that which is born of His soul-anguish and, "shall be satisfied."

11. *By His knowledge.* Or, "By the knowledge of Him."

11. *Shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shal1 bear their iniquities.* There is no meaning at all in this chapter if it does not teach that Christ took upon Himself the sin of His people and suffered in their place. Let who will object to this doctrine—it is the Gospel, the very heart and marrow of it—and there is nothing that can make a heavy heart glad until it sees sin removed by the death of Christ! "He shall bear their iniquities."

12. *Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out His soul unto death.* He not only died, but He poured out His very soul unto death.

12. *And He was numbered with the transgressors: and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* We shall also do well to read part of the 55th chapter of Isaiah after this 53rd—the one is an admirable preparation for the other

Isaiah 55:1. *Ho, everyone that thirsts; come you to the waters.* To the waters which flowed from that smitten Rock of which we have been reading.

1-3. *And he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto Me.* See, the way of salvation is through Ear-Gate? We must *hear* the Gospel, for it is not what we are to do, but what we are to *receive* that will save us. And we must come to God to hear it before we can receive it. "Faith comes by hearing." Give a very earnest ear, then, to the preaching of the Gospel of Christ! "Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat you that which is good, and

let your soul delight itself in fatness." Again the Lord says, "Incline your ear, and come unto Me."

3. *Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* Says someone, "I can understand God making a Covenant with David, but will He make a Covenant with *me*?" Yes, and after the same sure tenor, too—"I will make an *everlasting* Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." God will promise to bless you, save you, keep you and present you in Glory in the day of Christ's appearing. And this shall be a Covenant which shall never be broken. Though all things else are changed, yet that Covenant shall stand secure forever. It will fill you with joy when you understand that such a Covenant as this is made with you and you will say, as David did, "Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." Oh, what a blessing it is to have a share in this Covenant!

4. *Behold, I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people.* "I have given him," that is, David's greater Son, the true David, "I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people."

5. *Behold, you*—That is, Jesus, the Son of David: *"Behold,* You—

5-7. *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. Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.* Oh, that many may put this blessed promise to the proof even now, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—199, 554, 660.

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

A SINGULAR PLEA IN PRAYER
NO. 2535

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 27, 1884.

"I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul;
for I have sinned against You."
Psalm 41:4.

THIS was one of David's sayings—"I said." It was a saying that was worth saying and it is worth re-saying—"I said, Lord, be merciful unto me." How often he said it, we do not know. The more often, the better. There is no day too bright for saying it and there is no night too dark for saying it. "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me." Every one of David's sayings was not worth repeating, for he said some things that he had to retract. "I said in my haste," he said, on one occasion and, possibly, what he said in his haste he repented of at his leisure. But this saying in our text needs no retracting! It only needs repeating and, until we enter Heaven, we may keep on saying it—"I said, Lord, be merciful unto me." I have never heard of Christ rebuking anybody for speaking thus. He who said, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are," received no commendation from the Lord Jesus Christ. But he who said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," went down to his house justified rather than the other! This is a good saying, a true saying, a humble saying and a gracious saying. And I say again, the more often it is repeated, the better. "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me."

Observe that this is a saying to the Lord—"I said, LORD, be merciful unto me." You hear people say, when they are talking and gossiping, "I said to her and she said to me," or, "He said to me and I said to him"—so-and-so and so-and-so. Well, what does it matter what you said or what they said? Very likely it is not worth repeating, nor the answer that was made to it! Much of what is said may be summed up in the Dunottar Castle motto—

"THEY SAY.
WHAT DO THEY SAY?
LET THEM SAY."

It all comes to nothing! It is only breath vainly spent, which would be far more wisely expended if it were, as the poet Cowper said—

"To Heaven in supplication sent."

How much better it would be if each one of the parties concerned said, *"Lord,* be merciful unto me!" If we would speak twice to God and only once to men, or if we even reached so happy a proportion as at least to say *as much* to God as we say to our fellow men, how much healthier, happier, stronger, more heavenly and more holy would we become! You need not try to remember all that you have said to your fellow men—

probably much of that is best forgotten—but it is good to remember what you have said to your God, if it is anything like this saying of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me."

Let this be one of our sayings as well as David's. As he said, "Lord, be merciful unto me," I am sure I ought to say it, and I think, dear Friends, you ought to say it, too. If there is anybody here who thinks that he has grown so good that he does not need to pray, "Lord, be merciful unto me," I am very thankful, for once, that I am not as that man is, for he must be eaten up with pride! He cannot be right in his heart who will not pray for mercy and, surely, he has received no mercy who does not feel his need of more mercy. God can scarcely have begun to work in that man who thinks that he needs no longer make confession of sin, or seek mercy from God. David tells us, "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me," and I advise you to make this one of your sayings, also. People sometimes say, "It is an old saying," and that is supposed to be its commendation. Well, this, also, is an old saying. A young man says, "My father used to say so-and-so," and I have no doubt that, if you had a godly father, he used to say much that was worth remembering and worth repeating—and you cannot do better than use your father's words, especially if they were like David's on this occasion. Let it be reported of you in your biography, if it is ever written, "This was one of his sayings. He often said, 'Lord, be merciful unto me.'"

Notice, also, that this was the saying of a sick man and of a sick saint. "I said, Lord, Be merciful unto me." It is not written, "I said, Lord, You are unmerciful to me in chastening me; you deal too severely with me in placing me upon this sickbed and causing me to lie here till the bed grows hard as a rock beneath me." No, there is no complaining, here, though there is petitioning! There is no murmuring, though there is supplication. "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me." When you get well, again, after an illness, it will be a great comfort if you can look back and feel, "I did not complain, but the chief cry from my sickbed was, 'Lord, be merciful unto me.'"

I have thus briefly introduced to you one of the sayings of a sick saint—a sick king—and that king was David, the man after God's own heart. And I believe that this saying of his was after God's own heart and that this prayer was pleasing in the ears of the Most High. "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me." So now I will try to show you that our text contains, first, *a prayer*—"Lord, be merciful unto me." Next, *a confession*—"I have sinned against You." And then, thirdly, *a plea*, and a very singular plea it is—"I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against You."

I. First, here is, A PRAYER—"Lord, me merciful unto me." It may mean—and I daresay it *did* mean, at least in part—"*Mitigate my pains.*" O Beloved, when you feel your heart throbbing and palpitating, or when the swollen limb seems as if it were laid upon an anvil and beaten with red-hot hammers. When the pain goes through you again and again, till even the strong man is ready to cry out in his agony and the tears start unwillingly to the eyes, this is a good prayer to present to God, "Lord, be merciful unto me." I have sometimes found that where medicine has

failed and sleep has been chased away, and pain has become unbearable, it has been good to appeal to God directly, and to say, "O Lord, I am Your child! Will You allow Your child to be thus tortured with pain? Is it not written, 'Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him'? Lord, be merciful unto me."

I can solemnly assert that I have found immediate respite from convulsions of extreme pain in answer to a simple appeal to the Fatherhood of God and a casting myself upon His mercy. And I do not doubt that I am also describing the experience of many others of God's afflicted children. When grieved with sore physical pain, you will find, dear Friends, that the quiet resignation, the holy patience and the childlike submissiveness which enable you to just pray, "Lord, be merciful unto me," will often bring a better relief to you than anything that the most skilled physician can prescribe for you. You are permitted and encouraged to act thus—when the rod falls heavily upon you, look up into your Father's face and say, "Lord, be merciful unto me."

But that is not all that David meant, I am quite sure, for, next, he must have meant, "*Forgive my sins.*" You can see by his prayer that his sins were the heaviest affliction from which he was suffering—"Be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against You." And, believe me, there is no pain in the world that at all approximates to a sense of sin. I said to a dear friend who is greatly depressed at this time, "I should like you to have a little rheumatic gout, just to take your thoughts off your mental anxiety." "Oh," she said, "it would be a great pleasure to me to have that form of suffering rather than my present depression of spirit!" And I am sure that it is so—and if that depression of spirit is mingled with the thought of sinfulness and you are afraid—although, perhaps, in your case there may be no ground for fear because you really are God's child—but if you get afraid that you are not pardoned and forgiven, that fear will cut into you worse than a wound from a sword! It will make your blood boil more than would the poison of a cobra in your veins, for there is nothing so venomous as sin. So David meant, "I said, when I felt my sin—I said, when my spirit sank within me—Lord, be merciful unto me. Be merciful unto me."

Sinners' prayers suit depressed saints! The prayer of the publican is, after all, my everyday prayer. I have what I may call a Sunday prayer, a prayer for high days and holiday, but my everyday prayer, the one that I can use all through the week, the one that I can pick up when I cannot pick up anything else, is the publican's prayer, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." That prayer is "the baby's prayer," such as you would teach a child to pray. It is the prayer of the poor harlot, the prayer of the dying thief, "O God, be merciful to me!" It is a blessed, blessed prayer and I charge you never to cease from using it in the sense that our Lord taught it to His disciples, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

But that is not all that there is in this prayer. I think that David, when he said, "Lord, be merciful unto me," also meant, "*Fulfill Your promises.*" "You have said of the man who considers the poor, 'The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.' Lord, be merciful unto me and deliver me in the

time of my trouble. You have said, 'The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive.' Lord, be merciful unto me, preserve me and keep me alive. You have said that you will not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. Lord, be merciful unto me, and guard me from my foes. You will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing. Lord, be merciful unto me, and strengthen me. You will make all his bed in his sickness. Lord, make my bed." It is a very difficult thing to make a sick man's bed easy and I should think that it was still harder to make the kind of bed that David was accustomed to lie upon. We often have a soft bed with plenty of feathers in it, yet, after we have been lying upon it for a month, it gets very hard. No matter if it is a bed of down, it seems as if it were made of stones and one is apt to think that it is made very badly when it is really made exceedingly well. But I should think that the mattresses they used in the East must have been so hard that it needed God, Himself, to make soft beds for sick people, so the Lord comes in with this gracious promise, "I will make all his bed"—bolster, pillow, covering and all—"I will make all his bed in his sickness. I will help him. I will comfort him. I will make him patient. I will enable him to bear all My will."

Now, then, you dear saints of God who are in trouble, here is a prayer that is suitable for every one of you, "Lord, be merciful unto me." Should you get very badly off, then plead the promise, "You have said, 'Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.' Lord, be merciful unto me." Are you going down in the world? Remember that it is written, "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," and cry, "Lord, be merciful unto me." This prayer comes in appropriately at the back of every promise!

I know that I am addressing some who are not yet saved, but I wish that this prayer might get into each one of their hearts—"Lord, be merciful unto me." Keep on praying it until you obtain the mercy! Every five minutes in the day, wherever you are, let your heart go beating—beat, beat, beat, beat—to this tune, "Lord, be merciful unto me. Be merciful unto me. Be merciful unto me." You cannot have a prayer that will better fit your lips!

So far I have spoken of only half the Psalmist's prayer. The other half of it is, "Heal my soul." David does not pray, "Heal my eyes; heal my feet; heal my heart; heal me, whatever my disease may be," but he goes at once to the root of the whole matter and prays, "Heal my soul." O you sick ones, be more anxious to have your soul healed than to have your body cured! What does David mean by this portion of his prayer?

He means, I think, first, "*Heal me, Lord, of the distress of my soul!* My soul is afflicted with an appalling disease and is brought very low—'Lord, heal my soul.' I am so sad, so sorely frightened, such terrors pass before my eyes, my soul is morbid, melancholic, despondent—'Lord, heal my soul.'" The Lord is the great Soul-healer, therefore go to Him with this prayer, "Lord, heal me of the distress of my soul."

But also add this meaning to the petition—"*Lord, heal my* soul of *the effect of sin.*" Every sin brings on another sin. And the continuance in sin makes the tendency to sin, stronger. "'Heal my soul, Lord.' If I was once a drunk and I have given up the evil thing, yet the thirst will come—heal

my soul of it. If I have been a man of the world and have made unrighteous gains, the tendency to do so again will be strong upon me when the opportunity occurs—'Heal my soul, Lord.' That I may forget the wanton songs I used to sing, the wanton sights I once delighted in, the wanton lusts that once ate up my life, 'Heal my soul, Lord.'" It is one thing to be forgiven, it is another thing to be delivered from the result of a long life of sin! Yet God can do even that, so pray, "Lord, be merciful unto me and pardon me. Heal my soul and sanctify me."

I think that David also meant by this prayer, "*Heal me of my tendency to sin.*" He seemed to say, "Lord, I shall sin again if I am not healed. I have an evil tendency in me and an old nature which is inclined to sin. If You do not heal me of this disease, there will be another eruption upon the skin of my life and I shall sin again." When a man sins outwardly, it is because he has sin inwardly. If there were no sin in us, no sin would come out of us. But there it lies, sometimes concealed. I do not think it is ever a good thing to sin—that cannot be—but I have known a man to be tempted and to fall into sin who has discovered by his fall how much of sin there always was in him. It is something like the breaking out of a disease in the skin—it would not have broken out if it had not been there before. And the outbreak, however grievous it is, may be useful by driving the sufferer to seek a cure and so he becomes thoroughly healed. This is the meaning of David's prayer, "Heal my soul, for I have sinned. Heal me, that I may not sin again."

II. The second part of our subject is A CONFESSION. "I have sinned against You." I do not want to simply have these words in my mouth, to tell them to you. I wish that I could put them into your mouths, O you unconverted ones, that you might say them to God! Let us briefly consider what is meant by this confession, "I have sinned against You."

First, it is a confession *without an excuse*. David does not say, "I have sinned against You, but I could not help it," or, "I was sorely tempted," or, "I was in trying circumstances." No, as long as a man can make an excuse for his sin, he will be a lost man. But when he dares not and cannot frame an excuse, there is hope for him. "I have sinned against You," is a confession without an excuse.

Further, it is a confession *without any qualification.* He does not say, "Lord, I have sinned to a certain extent, but, still, I have partly balanced my sins by my virtues and I hope to wipe out my faults with my tears." No. He says, "I have sinned against You," as if that were a full description of his whole life. He bows his knees and just confesses unto God, "Lord, I give up everything in the way of self-defense or self-justification. 'I have sinned against You.'"

But notice, also, that this confession is *without affectation.* When some people say, "We have sinned," you can tell by their manner that they think they are, by their confession, complimenting God. You talk with them and they say, "Oh, yes, Sir, we are all sinners!" Yes, they are all sinners like the monk who said that he had broken all the commandments, and was the most wicked man in the world. So one of his companions asked him if he had broken the First Commandment. Another asked about the Second, then the Third, the Fourth, the Fifth and all the

rest. And to each one he kept saying, "No, I never broken that in my life." They inquired about the whole ten and he declared that he had never broken one of them—yet this was the man who had confessed that he had broken all ten! And there are men who say that they are sinners, yet they do not mean it. And a sham sinner will only have a sham savior—that is to say, a man who only pretends to be a sinner and does not realize his guilt in the sight of God, *will not have a Savior*. Christ died for nobody but real sinners, those who feel that their sin is truly sin—

"A sinner is a sacred thing,
The Holy Spirit has made him so"

and if I am happy enough to meet with a man who puts himself down with real sinners, I bid him believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and expect that, by so doing, he will find a real Savior who will cleanse him from sin by His precious blood!

I wanted you to notice that there was no affectation about David's confession of sin, for, in the next verse he says, "My enemies speak evil of me." He was not going to confess sin which he had not committed—and when men spoke against him, he said, "They speak evil of me." Well, but, David, how can they speak evil of you when you confess that you are so bad? "Yes," he says, "but I have not done that with which they charge me. I confess that I have sinned against God, but I have not sinned against Him in the way they say I have. So far as their charges are concerned, I am innocent and pure. What I confess is that I have sinned against God." I like a man, when he makes a confession of sin, not to be carried away into the use of proud expressions without meaning, but to speak with judgment and to acknowledge and confess only what is true. This is the excellence of David's confession, that he acknowledges to what no sinner will ever admit till the Grace of God makes him do it—"I have sinned *against You*."

Hear him again in the 51st Psalm—"Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." Hear the prodigal—"Father, I have sinned *against Heaven*, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son." The essence of sin is that it is sin against *God*. It is wrong to do any harm to your neighbor, but, after all, you and he are only two subjects of the great King and Lord of All. It is high treason to sin against God and often that sin, of which men think the least, God thinks the most. That spiritual sin of which some say, "Oh, that is a mere trifle!"—that forgetting of the Creator, that ignoring of the only Redeemer—this is the sin of sins, the damning sin which kindles the flames of Hell! And it is a good thing and a right thing, when a man's confession of sin has David's confession as the very core of it, "Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against You."

III. Now I close by noticing A PLEA and a very singular plea it is. The Psalmist's prayer is followed by a confession and, strangely enough, the confession is the argument of the prayer. Listen to the text again—"I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul." Why? "*For I have sinned against You."*

That is a very startling and remarkable way of pleading, but it is the only right one. It is *such a plea as no self-righteous man would urge.* The

Pharisee keeps to this strain, "Lord, be merciful unto me, for I have been obedient, I have kept Your Law." O foolish, self-righteous man! Do you not see that you are shutting the door in your own face? You say, in effect, "Be merciful unto me, for I do not need any mercy." That is what it practically comes to and, therefore, you are contradicting your own prayer! If you have kept the Law from your youth up and you have been so good and so obedient, you do not need any mercy from God! Why, therefore, do you ask for it? No man who thinks himself better than his neighbors, strictly upright, honorable and worthy of reward, will ever bow his knees and cry to God, "Have mercy upon me, for I have sinned against You." He pleads, on the contrary, "Have mercy upon me, for I am a most respectable man. I pay everybody twenty shillings in the pound. I have brought up my family most admirably. Have mercy upon me." I say again, he asks for charity and then says, "I do not need it. Give me of Your charity, O God, but I am not one of the poor beggars that crawl about the street—I am as well-to-do as anybody." None but the poor will value the charity of men and none but the guilty will value the charity of God. If you are not a sinner, Christ as a Savior has nothing to do with you. He came into the world to save sinners—and as for you who count yourselves righteous, this is what He says about you, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." As Mary sang, "He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent empty away." Let them feed themselves if they have such an abundance as they say. This, then, is the sort of plea that a self-righteous man would not urge.

This is, further, *such a plea as a carnal reasoner could not urge,* for he could not spy out any reason or argument in it. "Am I to appeal to my God for mercy and for soul-healing on the ground that I have sinned? Why," he says, "there is no plea in *that*." But he who has been to Christ's School and learned the logic of the Cross, will know that there is no argument equal in force to this—"Lord, I have sinned, I need mercy. Give it to me, Lord. I have sinned and, therefore, I have no right whatever to expect anything of You—therefore glorify Yourself by the freeness and spontaneity of Your abounding Grace! Lord, I have sinned and this sinning has destroyed me! Have pity upon me. This sinning is like a deadly disease within my soul. Therefore, Great Physician, come and heal me! This sinning has killed me. Make me alive. This sinning has damned me. Come and save me!"

That is the best pleading in all the world and, after all, it is the common pleading that men make use of with their fellow men. When one comes begging of me, what does he say? In nine cases out of ten, he tells me what is not true! That I can vouch for, but I always notice that he never pleads thus—"Now, Sir, I want you to give me help because I do not need it very much. I am not at all badly off—I already have about as much as I need—but I thought that I would take to begging because it is a genteel kind of occupation." You never hear him talk like that! I remember giving a man, who came begging of me with bare feet, a pair of patent leather boots. They were nearly done with, but I thought that he might make some use of them. He put them on, but he was not so foolish as to go begging in them! At the first gateway he came to, he pulled them

off and I met him, ten minutes afterwards, without the boots, except that he had them slung over his back, ready to sell to the first likely customer! He knew that rags are the best clothes for a beggar—if he would succeed in his calling, the fouler and the more ragged he looked, the better for him—for so he appeals to our sense of pity. At any rate, that is the way to beg of God. Do not go and smarten yourself up and say, "Lord, I am pretty decent as I am. Be merciful unto me." No, but go in your rags—go just as you are, in all your sin, filthiness, weakness, poverty and insignificance—and so appeal to the pity and the mercy of God.

This is sound common sense that I am talking. Suppose there had been a battle and I were a soldier who had been wounded and lay upon the plain? And suppose the surgeon and the men with the ambulance were going round to see who needed their help? If they came to me, I do not think I should say, "Well, Doctor, I have got a bullet in here somewhere, but it has not gone in very far. I daresay it will be all right—you can leave me here." Oh, no! I would say, "I am afraid, Doctor, that this bullet is very near my heart. You had better let your men pick me up and attend to me quickly, or I may be very soon dead." I certainly would not try to make myself out to be better than I was! And I would be glad to be attended to at once. And what folly it is when a man tries to comfort himself, as a sinner, by looking up all his filthy rags of self-righteousness and saying, "Lord, I do not think there is very much the matter with me." O Soul, if you did but know it, your whole head is sick and your whole heart is faint—from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet you are covered with wounds, bruises and putrefying sores! There is but a step between you and death—between you and Hell—if you have never been washed in the precious blood of Jesus Christ! Therefore, do not set up your lying pretences! Do not paint yourself up, like Jezebel, for you cannot, in that way, make yourself beautiful in the sight of God! You must go to Him with all your wrinkles, all your foulness and everything else that is hideous, and say, "Lord, I have no beauty, I have no merit, nothing to plead, nothing to urge but my guilt. 'Heal my soul; for I have sinned against You.'" Then you shall be saved!

When a man cannot pay to God a penny in the pound of all his debts, then he will be frankly forgiven all. But as long as he promises that he will make a composition and do his best to pay what he owes to Divine Justice in the hope that Jesus Christ will make up the rest, there is no hope for him! The Lord Jesus Christ will not be a mere counterbalance for you! Do you think that you are to get into the scale with your beautiful righteousness and that you are to be accounted somebody of great importance—and that Christ is to do the little that you cannot do—that it is to be "Christ & Co.," or rather, "Self & Co."? And that you are to be the head of the firm and Christ to be a kind of silent partner? He will not do it! It would be a disgrace to Christ to yoke you with Him in such a fashion. You might as soon yoke a gnat with an archangel as think of your going in to help Christ to save you! To join a filthy rag from off a dunghill with the golden garments of a king or a queen cannot be permitted! Christ will be everything, or else He will be nothing—you must be saved wholly by mercy, or else not at all! There must not be even a trace of the

fingers of self-righteousness upon the acts and documents of Divine Grace. It must be all of Grace—"And if by Grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise Grace is no more Grace."

There can be no more mingling of the two together as the ground of hope than oil will mix with water, or fire will burn beneath the sea. You cannot be saved by your own merits! Oh, then, I implore you, breathe this prayer to God, "Lord, be merciful unto me; pardon me, for You have mercy upon sinners, and here is one! You heal the sick, and here is one! Lord, by Your Grace I trust You! I lay my sins on Jesus, I lay my soul-sickness at his dear feet. Lord, save me." It is all done if you trust Jesus—you are saved!

Just before I came in to this service, I saw a young Brother whom I mean to propose to the Church and who, last Sunday came to me, after the morning sermon, and said, "Sir, I am saved, and I know I am." And as I spoke to him, I thought that I knew it, too. Why should there not be many others in the same blessed condition? What is the use of preaching—what is the use of this vast crowd coming together and going away again—unless men and women believe in Christ? Look unto Jesus and be saved! If you look, you shall be saved now! The Lord lead you to look at this very moment, and unto Him be praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 41, 42.

You will see, dear Friends, from these holy songs, that the saints of God in those olden days were not screened from trials and troubles, but were tempted in all points like as we are. If we happen to be in similar trying circumstances, let us take comfort from their experiences. The footsteps of the flock that has gone before should make the sheep feel that it is not lost.

Psalm 41 To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

Verse 1. *Blessed is he that considers the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.* David delivered *others* and God will deliver him. When he is poor and needy, God will think upon him, even as David considered the poor and the needy when they cried to him.

2, 3. *The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and You will not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: You will make all his bed in his sickness.* God will be condescendingly gentle to such as are kind and gentle to the poor. If we love God, first, and then exhibit the result of that love in our care for the poor and the needy, we shall certainly be recompensed, for he that gives to the poor lends to the Lord, and the Lord will pay him back—sometimes in his own coin, but more often in a coin of heavenly currency. Let us take note of this and let us never harden our heart against the poor and the needy in the time of their extremity.

4. *I said, Lord, be merciful unto me.* David had been very kind to the poor at all times, but when he gets into trouble, he does not plead that,

he just mentions it. The main stress of his pleading is quite in another direction, namely, for mercy—"I said, Lord be merciful unto me."

4, 5. *Heal my soul; for I have sinned against You. My enemies speak evil of me. When will he die, and his name perish?* But good men do not die to please wicked men. But sometimes, when the good men have been dead, buried and their memory has been insulted by the wicked, they have risen up, again, in their posthumous influence! Good men live too long for the wicked, but they live as long as God wills that they should—they are immortal till their work is done. The story of Wycliffe is but a typical case of what has often happened. When the monks gathered round his bed and expected that their opponent would soon be gone, he said, "I shall not die, but live," and so he did. And even after he had died, he continued to be a living power in the land. Indeed, we know not how much of the blessings we enjoy is the result of the light that was shed upon England by "the Morning Star of the Reformation."

6. *And if he comes to see me, he speaks vanity: his heart gathers iniquity to itself; when he goes abroad, he tells it.* Those are bad visitors to the sick who, when they speak, talk only nonsense or that which galls the sufferer. And then, when they go out, begin to tell an idle tale against him to his injury.

7-9. *All who hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. An evil disease, say they, cleaves fast unto him: and now that he lies, he shall rise up no more. Yes, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.* Many a child of God has had his character whispered down by slanderers. Many a man has had a hard time of it through the evil speaking of men of the world. Yes, even the Lord of saints and the King of pilgrims knew what it was to find a traitor in His most familiar friend and to receive the basest ingratitude from one who had eaten of His bread. Do not be carried away with too much sorrow if you are slandered or betrayed—better men than you have suffered through this fearful evil! Take the trouble to your Lord and bear it with such patience as He will give you.

10, 11. *But You, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them. By this I know that You favor me, because my enemy does not triumph over me.* "He may think that he shall triumph over me. He may even begin, in his mind, to divide the spoil. But he shall never really get it—'My enemy does not triumph over me.'"

12, 13. *And as for me, You uphold me in my integrity, and set me before Your face forever. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.*

That is the sick man's praise—it is full of fervor and full of life. Let us never rob God of the revenue of His praises! Let us not have such a cupboard love for Him that we only praise Him when He gives us good things. Let us bless His name just as much when He takes away, when He afflicts, when He chastises! That is true praise which comes from the bed of affliction and from a heart that is sorely broken with sorrow.

Now in the next Psalm we find the good man in trouble again.

Psalm 42:1. *As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God.* "As the hart pants" or "brays." And if such is your

soul's panting after God, you shall have what you pant for. Sooner or later God will manifest Himself in Grace to the man who cries after Him in this fashion!

2. *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.* "My soul, my very soul, thirsts for God, the living God."

2, 3. *When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is your God?* That is another of the taunts of the ungodly. Just now, they said, "When shall he die and his name perish?" Now they cry, "Where is your God? You said that He would help you. You were sure that He would comfort you. You were confident that He would draw near to you—and now you are crying and panting after Him and have not got what you want—'Where is your God?'"

4. *When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me.* That is not a good thing to do. If you pour your soul out, do not pour it into *yourself*! There is little gain when you merely empty your grief *out* of yourself *into* yourself. I have known many a man lay his burden down and then take it up, again, directly. That is poor economy! The way to get rid of the sorrow is to pour out your hearts before God! There is no wisdom in doing what the Psalmist says he did—"I pour out my soul in me."

4, 5. *For I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday. Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted in me?* You see, the Psalmist, here, talks to himself. Every man is two men—we are duplicates, if not triplicates—and it is well, sometimes, to hold a dialogue with one's self. "Why are you cast down, O my Soul?" I always notice that as long as I can argue with myself about my depressions, I can get out of them. But when both the men within me go down at once, it is a downfall, indeed! When there is one foot on the solid rock, the other comes up to it pretty soon.

5. *Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance.* "I know I shall. He will yet look at me. I shall not always be in the dark. Therefore, let me begin at once to praise Him." It is well, sometimes, to snatch a light from the altars of the future and with it to kindle the sacrifices of the present. "I shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance."

6. *O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.* From the little hill I will think of all Your former love—all the sacred spots where You have met with me, all the lonely places where You have been my Comfort, and all the joyful regions where You have been my glory. I will think of these, and take comfort from them, for You are an unchanging God, and what You did for me before, You will do for me again and yet again.

7. *Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterspouts: all Your waves and Your billows are gone over me.* Here is a great storm. Here is a man, not merely on the sea, but in the sea with not only some waves beating upon him, but with all of them going over him. And those not common waves, but God's waves. That is a Hebraism for the biggest

waves, Atlantic billows—all these have gone right over him, yet see how he swims! Hope in God always crests the stormiest billow.

8, 9. *Yet the Lord will command His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life will say unto God, my Rock, Why have You forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?* See what liberties saints take with God—how they reason with Him, how they argue with Him—and God loves them to do so. Are you not pleased with your child when he urges reasons why you should do this or that for him? You are glad to see that he has mind enough to think of these things and confidence enough in you to expect you to be affected by his pleading. And the Lord loves His people to commune with Him. "Put Me in remembrance," He says. "Let us plead together." "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord." If we reasoned more with God, we should reason less with ourselves. There is a good reason for reasoning with God, but it is often unreasonable to reason with yourself.

10, 11. *As with a sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is your God? 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.* It is curious to see the duplicate man here. He talks to himself as, "you," and yet he says, "I." "Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance." First, he said, "I shall yet praise Him, for the help of His countenance." Now it is, "the *health* of *my* countenance." When God helps us with His countenance, then our own countenance soon grows bright and healthy! "Who is the health of my countenance," says the Psalmist, and then he comes to the sweetest note of all, "and my God."—

"For yet I know I shall him praise,
Who graciously to me,
The health is of my countenance,
Yes, my own God is he."

Oh, sweet word, that! May each of us be able to reach it! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—537, 594, 607.

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THE ETHIOPIAN
NO. 2536

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 15, 1884.

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?
Then may you also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."
Jeremiah 13:23.

Jeremiah had a friend who was a black man. Ebedmelech, the Ethiopian eunuch, had a great and tender concern for Jeremiah when he was shut up in the miry prison. He took ropes and covered them with rags that they might not cut the poor Prophet's armpits, and drew him up out of that filthy well into which he had been cast for the Truth of God's sake. I suppose, from the way Ebedmelech afterwards treated the Prophet Jeremiah, that they were great friends. And as we usually talk of people of whom we are fond, it was natural that Jeremiah should use the Ethiopian as an emblem. I do not know that any other Prophet did so. Perhaps there was no other Prophet who took to a Negro so thoroughly as Jeremiah did, but, anyway, he had that black man's face imprinted on his mind and when he was speaking to the people, the Holy Spirit moved him to use a simile with which he had become familiar. I wish that every thought and experience I have ever had could be used in speaking for my Lord. I would like to never set my eyes on anyone or anything without trying to turn all to good account for the Master's work. And if those of us who are teachers of others will only go about with our eyes open, we shall find plenty of illustrations of the Truths we have to proclaim. There will not be a black man cross our path but we shall learn something or other from him.

Let us go at once to our text and notice that it contains *a question which admits of only one answer*—"Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" Of course he cannot! And this fact suggests to us a *spiritual* question—Can a man who is accustomed to do evil, so change himself as to do good? Of course he cannot, any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin! When we have talked over that question which admits of only one answer, I shall put *another question which admits of the opposite reply.* In that latter part of our subject may the Lord be pleased to send comfort to those who are despairing and who know that they can no more change their own nature than the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots!

I. First, we are to consider a question which admits of only one answer—"Can the Ethiopian change his skin?"

No one ever heard of such a thing being done. Very wonderful things have occurred, but no one has ever yet heard of a blackamoor who has

been able to wash himself white. It was an old fable of Aesop as to the absurdity of attempting to do anything of the kind and, often, when we want to point out that a thing cannot be done, we use this simile, and say, "You cannot change the blackamoor's skin."

There are some things that men can do. A white man may be made almost black, as far as his skin is concerned. There are certain medicines that operate upon the skin and give it a very strange color—you may have seen a few such cases in your lifetime. But, though you can put the color in, you cannot take it out. The man who is white, or the woman who is very fair, may, either of them, sit in the sun till they become browned so that they might almost say with the spouse in the Song of Solomon, "I am black because the sun has looked upon me." But you could not turn a black man, white, though you can turn a white man black. You can do what you please by way of spoiling, but you can do nothing by way of mending. You can make yourself filthy by sin, but you cannot make yourself spiritually clean, do what you will! There is an ease about going down—you can jump down a precipice quickly enough, but who could stand at the bottom of a high cliff and leap to the top at one bound? Man can come down against his will, but he cannot go up even with his will. You can do evil all too readily—you can do it with both hands, greedily, and do it again and again and not grow weary of it—but to return to the right path, this is the difficulty!

As Virgil said about his arduous task when he went down to the land of shades, "Easy is the descent to Avernus, but to return to the clear air again—this is the work, this is the difficulty." You have all seen persons make themselves black externally—the chimney sweep in pursuit of his lawful calling becomes quite as black as a Negro, yet, with a basin of water, he can change the look of his face very speedily because the blackness is only something outside of him which merely adheres to him for a time. But the question of our text is, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" That is a part of himself and he cannot alter it. The Ethiopian can wash himself clean and he ought to do so, it is his duty to do so. And a man can keep himself moral and he ought to do so, it is his duty. If the Negro is ever so black, he may be clean, but he cannot wash himself white, neither can a sinner cleanse himself from the stains of his guilt.

But remember, dear Friends, that, even if an Ethiopian could change his skin, that would be a far smaller difficulty than the one with which a sinner has to deal, for it is not his skin, but his *heart* which has to be changed. There are some creatures in which, if they lose a limb, it will grow again, or another will come in its place, but there is no creature living that could lose its heart and then grow another. There is a tree of a certain sort and you can, if you please, graft upon it and it will produce a different kind of fruit. Or you can take off one limb of a tree and another branch may grow—but you cannot change the tree's heart. Even if it were possible for the Ethiopian to change his skin, that would be a change, as we say, only skin-deep, and that is no parallel to the sinner and his sin—the leprosy lies deep within. It is the heart that is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." It is the center and source of thought and action which is polluted and a change must be worked

there. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" No, but if he could do so, could a sinner change his heart? Assuredly not!

Observe, dear Friends, that the question is about an Ethiopian changing his skin *himself*. That cannot be done, certainly, but, if it could be done, a man could not, himself, change his own heart. For an evil heart to make its own self good is inconceivable. Darkness never did beget light. You may sit as long as you like in the sepulcher amid the dry bones, but life will never be born of death—life must come from quite a different source. The earth warms the seeds in her bosom and nourishes them into growth, but if those seeds were dead, all the genial seasons could not make them spring up. And even if the earth could make dead seeds to live, that is not the kind of miracle of which we are speaking—the miracle would be for the *dead seed to make itself alive*. That is utterly beyond the bounds of possibility! The figure in our text is a very strong one. As I have said before, the Ethiopian cannot change his own skin, but even that figure is not strong enough to express the utter helplessness of human nature as to its own renewal, for the change is greater and deeper—and it is quite impossible that it ever should come from fallen human nature.

Let me try to set forth, in some small measure, the difficulty of this business. The first difficulty is because the evil that man has is *in his nature.* If sin were merely an accident, then it might be prevented. But it is not so. If sheep were to fall down into the mud, they might soon be up again, and it would be possible to keep them from falling. But when the swine go down into the mud, they roll in it because they delight in wallowing! As long as there is any mire about and the sow can get there, she will return to her wallowing as long as she remains a sow, for the filthiness is in her nature as well as in that which surrounds her! And it is so with us so far as sin is concerned. The Ethiopian could wash himself clean, but the blackness of his skin is a part of his Ethiopian nature and he cannot get rid of that. The leopard's spots are not accidental to it, but it has spots because it is a leopard.

So, sin is not accidental to human nature, but it is part and parcel of ourselves. When you see a man, you see a sinner! And if you could look into his heart, you would see the seed-plot of all manner of mischief which only needs congenial surroundings to fully develop itself. How can a man change his own nature? I do not suppose that, by any possibility, I could ever become an Ethiopian. I do not think that if I were to set my mind to the task, I could ever, by any possibility, turn into a Dutchman because I was not born so—it is not according to my nature. I must remain an Englishman, Essex-born, as long as I live. Only a miracle could make me anything different from that! And the sinner is a sinner right through. Wherever you look at him, he is a sinner, and so he always will be unless a superior power shall intervene to change him.

Alas also, this evil nature of man brings with it the fact that *his will* is altogether perverted. A man will not cease to do evil and learn to do well because he has no heart to do it. Sinners do not want to be saved. "Oh," says one, "I do!" But do you understand what it is to be saved? Every sinner would like to escape from going to Hell, but that is *not* what is meant

by salvation. To be saved means to be saved from loving evil, from seeking after it and living in it. Do you want to be saved from that? Do you want to be saved from falsehood, saved from the indulgence of your passions, saved from strong drink, saved from pride, saved from covetousness? The most of men have not a heart inclined to that—there is some sweet sin of theirs which they would like to sip, at least now and then upon the sly. That is to say, evil, as evil, is not abhorrent to the natural will, but the natural will of man goes after that which is evil as surely as ever children seek after that which is sweet! Sin is sweet to man and he will have it if he can. How, then, can his nature be changed while he has no will to it? The will is, as it were, the rudder of the ship. My Lord Will-be-Will, according to John Bunyan, is the Lord Mayor of the town of Mansoul. And so he is, and he carries it in a very lordly way. He will have this and he will have that—and he will not have the other—and he is the master of the man. Till the will is changed, till what is called, "free will," is made, in truth, to be free will—free from the chains of evil and the love of sin—the man cannot rise to happiness and God any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin!

Moreover, in connection with this natural depravity, and the perversity of the human will, there comes to be *the power of habit.* Oh, what an awful force the power of evil habit has upon a man! It begins at first only like a cobweb—he can break it when he pleases. It grows into a thread and he is somewhat restrained by it. It changes to a cord and he is in a net. It hardens into iron and the iron becomes further hardened into steel—and the man is shut up in it. He becomes like the starling that cried, "I cannot get out! I cannot get out!" The sad thing is that the man is in a cage of his own making! It is a sort of living cage which has grown up all around him and he cannot escape from it! How often is this the case with strong drink! The man at first only took a very little, but how much does he take now? Mr. Wesley, when dining once with a friend of his who had greatly helped him in the district, saw him, after dinner, rise from the table and get just a little brandy and water, Mr. Wesley said to him, "My Friend, what is that?" "I am very much troubled with indigestion," he answered, "but I only take a tablespoonful of brandy in a little water." "Well," said Mr. Wesley, "that is certainly very little, but, my Friend, you will want two tablespoonfuls before long to do for you what you think that one does. And then you will want four. And then you will want eight and, unless you give it up, I fear that you will become a drunk and disgrace the cause of God." After Mr. Wesley was dead, that man still lived a drunkard—he had lost his reputation, disgraced the people with whom he had been connected and brought untold sorrow upon himself.

Now, as it is with that one particular sin, so it is with every other! If a sin comes, alone, to your house the first time, it will come the next time with seven other devils more wicked than itself—and those seven will very soon bring seven each and you will have a legion of devils! And when you get one legion, it is highly probable that another legion will come into the barracks of your heart and stay there. The beginning of sin is like the letting out of water—just a little drop trickles through the wall of the dike. Then it becomes a tiny rivulet which a child's hand can stop—then

it increases to a stream and soon the dike begins to heave, break, crack and, by-and-by, it is broken down and a torrent rushes over town and village and carries away multitudes of men with it. Beware! That evil habit is a dreadful thing—he who yields to an evil habit is preparing himself for the bottomless pit!

In addition to this habit, I grieve to say that there generally springs up a kind of *delight in sin.* There are, no doubt, some men who, for a time, feel an intense satisfaction in sin. Yes, and not only in their own sins, but they take pleasure in the sins of others. I hope you never hear them talk. If it has ever been your misfortune to do so, you know that they will talk about some piece of filthiness as if it were a brave thing. They will boast about what some boy has done under their abominable tuition and they seem to take a delight in seeing how precocious he is in everything that is vile. Some men are never happy except when they are destroying souls and, while the deepest pleasure under Heaven is to bring a soul to God, the most diabolical pleasure out of Hell is certainly that of helping to damn a soul! Yet there are many who seem to take a delight in that terrible work. How some skeptics endeavor to entrap a youthful Believer! How some licentious persons seem to lay themselves out to try and seduce others! How many there are who have become ripe in iniquity and their evil seed is scattered broadcast, sowing sin and everlasting ruin upon every wind that blows! Can such an Ethiopian as that change his skin or such a leopard as that his spots? Of course he cannot—the case is utterly hopeless so far as his own power is concerned.

Further than this, *the force of sin increases upon men.* If a stone is let fall from a tower, it multiplies the pace of its fall in a mathematical ratio. It drops very much faster the last part of its descent than it did at the first. Set anything rolling down a hill and see how the momentum increases. A railway truck has got on a decline—it is running down. It starts slowly enough at first, you might easily stop it. But let it go on and see how it accumulates force as it rushes along till it breaks through every obstacle. Well, just such is the power of sin in men—they seem as if they cannot sin enough. Having once given themselves up to the demon power, it comes upon them stronger and yet stronger till the appetite grows within them into a passion and a fury—and a fire that burns like the flame of Gehenna that cannot be slowed or quenched. I know what they think at first—that they will go just so far and then stop. Well, try it—no, do NOT try it! It would be an awful experiment to set a house on fire, intending to let it burn just so much and no more. Can you say to the fire, "You shall come this far, but no farther"? Even if you could say it to fire among standing corn, blown by the wind, yet you would say it in vain to sin! Sin swiftly grows from a pigmy to a giant and, ever increasing in its awful power, it crushes down the man who is in its grip and holds him under its dreadful sway.

There are many drunks who now have within them a compulsion to drink. They seem as if they could not pass by the door of the bar. There is many an adulterer who cannot glance without a lascivious thought. As for the gambler—and I dare to say that there is no sin that does more swiftly send men down to Hell than gambling—having once begun with

his shilling and his pound, he will plunge till he has lost his all! There is an awful infatuation about this evil—it is a stream that catches the boat and bears it swiftly along, noiselessly, but with irresistible force, till it comes to the cataract of endless ruin! Oh, that you could escape! But there are some who never can and never will—and there is not one of us who can escape unless He who is mighty to save shall come in with His own right hand and His holy arm and get unto Himself the victory! For when once the force of sin really grasps a man, we may ask concerning him, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" and answer, "No, he cannot."

Added to all this there is another horrible evil—after a while *the understanding refuses to see.* The man who, at first, knew a thing to be wrong, may continue in it till he does not believe it to be wrong at all. There are men who can utter language which would have chilled their blood when they first began to swear. But now it drops from them as an ordinary word. I believe that the filthy talkers of our street, or the most of them, do not mean anything by what they say—they have got so hardened in misusing the Lord's name and using obscene language that their understanding does not convict them of having done wrong. They have given Mr. Conscience so much opium that he has gone to sleep! Now and then, perhaps, he wakes up and makes a great noise—but they soon lull him to sleep, again—and they go on sinning without compunction. We read of David, on one occasion, that his heart smote him. It is an ugly knock when your own heart smites you, for that blow comes home. But it is also a blessed knock and, if any of you have never felt it, I am very sorry for you. If your heart never smites you, it must be because your conscience has fallen into a dead sleep, or is seared as with a red-hot iron! When a man reaches that stage that he can lie and swear, and then can wipe his mouth and say that there is nothing in it, oh, how shall such a man be changed? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good that are accustomed to do evil."

Then, again, as a man's conscience is sent to sleep, so his heart is *hardened against every holy influence that might move him.* He used to go to a place of worship, once, but he will not go now. He rails at such places and pours contempt upon Gospel ministers and all Christian people. Though he is as bad as he can be, yet he thinks that he is better than they are and he tries to trample under his feet the saints of God. Though such a wretch as he is not worthy, even, to unloose the laces of their shoes, he cannot have sufficiently bad names for them. In former times, when there came sickness into the house, he used to pray. And in time of trouble he sought the Lord. He has had many a trouble, since, but he is not at all disturbed about it—he only gets angry against God and becomes more and more hardened in sin. His dear wife used to have a wonderful influence over him for good, but he has even broken away from that. And there is that dear girl of his—he loves her very much and she has pleaded with her father. And there is somebody else there, for a little child has led him, but now he feels that all that is a kind of weakness and he will get beyond it. Ah, he is hardening himself! As for his Bible—alas, he never reads that. If there is a word spoken to him by some

kind friend who takes an earnest interest in his welfare, he lets it go in one ear and out the other—or else he gets into a furious passion and asks who he is that he is to be talked to like that! He is as good as anybody else, though he knows, all the while, that he is rotten right through.

What is to be done with a man like that? He is determined to go over hedge and ditch to Hell. His father, a dear gray-headed old saint, has blocked the way, but he has pushed him aside. His mother has come and said, "My Boy, do not ruin yourself," and she has hung about his neck and tried to keep him from sin. But he has shaken her off. In spite of wife, child, and friends, he is determined to destroy himself! And do you tell me that such a man is able to change himself? Yes, when Ethiopians change their skins and when leopards change their own spots, then will it be done, but not till then! The case is hopeless if it remains with the man, himself—the work cannot be accomplished.

You will say that now, surely, I have gone far enough in my description of this man. And so I have, painfully far, but what can he do by which he can change his nature and make a new man of himself? *All outward means are unavailing.* He may go and hear sermons. Well, I know that sermons of *my* preaching will never turn a heart of stone into flesh. Without the Spirit of God there will be no result whatever produced! The man may be christened, or he may be baptized, but what is there in water drops or water floods that can alter his sinful nature? Why, there have been villains upon earth who have gone through every religious ceremony and yet have ended at the gallows! You may scrub an Ethiopian till you scrub his skin away, but he will be as black as ever when you have done with him. So is it with the sinner. You may put him through every form and ceremony of the church—and you may make him think that he has accepted the orthodox creed and you may even alter his outward life to a considerable extent—yet, when it is all done, nothing at all will really have been done towards his soul's salvation!

Somebody, perhaps, asks, "Why, then, do you preach to these people?" Well, I do it principally because I am sent to do it. You see, if God were to send me to preach to the mountains and to bid them move, I would go and do it—and expect to see them move! If He were to bid me go and stand on the shore, and say to the salt sea waves, "Turn into fresh water," I would do it, not because I think the sea, which is salt, can make *itself* fresh, but because my Lord never sent me on a fool's errand and He will honor the message He tells me to deliver! I heard somebody say that to tell a dead sinner to live was as if you were to stand at a grave and bid a dead body live. That is *exactly* it, my dear Friends, and you say it is ridiculous. Yes, it is very ridiculous if you leave God out of it, but as we are *told to do it*, we leave the responsibility of it with the Lord—and we intend to go on with this thing which men call ridiculous! Like Ezekiel, we are commanded to say, "O you dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord." Somebody objects that dry bones cannot hear—that does not matter to us—we are bid to tell them to hear and we expect that the Lord will enable them to hear what He has commanded us to say to them!

Another reason why we do it is because, when we have been preaching the Gospel to these Blackamoors, when we have been holding up Jesus

Christ and Him crucified to these Ethiopians, we have seen them turn white! So we shall keep on, dear Friends, for, though they could not turn themselves white, yet when we have come in the name of the Lord and said to the Ethiopian, "Be white," he has become white before our very eyes. I have seen, not only hundreds, but I have seen many thousands of persons from whose lips I have heard the story that though they were formerly persecutors of Christ and His people, they have become His followers! Or, though they were fond of drink and every evil thing, they have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. So I shall keep on bidding sinners do this impossible thing, for, God working with me, the withered hand shall be stretched out and the dead Lazarus shall come forth from the grave at the bidding of the Lord!

II. I said that I would finish up with another question and another answer. I have only two or three minutes in which to speak about them. The question of the text is, "*Can* the Ethiopian change his skin?" The answer is—No, no, no, no, no, no! Here is the other question—*Can the Ethiopian's skin be changed? The* answer to that is—Yes, yes, yes, as emphatically as we have just now said no, no, no! Can the Ethiopian's skin be changed? Can the sinner's nature be renewed? Yes, for *God can do everything.* He changed primeval darkness into light! He changed chaos into order and God can turn that poor ruined man—that wretched drunk, swearer, adulterer, into one who is chaste, pure, ad lovely and honest, for all things are possible with God! He who made us can newly make us! There is nobody who can put your clock in order so well as the man who made it. If your clock has gone wrong, you had better send it to the maker if you can find him. And there is nobody who can put a heart in order like the God who made the heart. Send your heart to Him, for He can make it new by His blessed Spirit.

Remember, also, that it is provided in the Covenant of Grace that *the Holy Spirit should make us new.* It is written, "A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." God the Holy Spirit, as a Spirit, is master of our spirits. My dear Friend with a bad temper, the Holy Spirit can conquer that evil! You who have such a forgetful memory, he can conquer that! You who are so proud, He can make you humble! You who feel so hard, He can dissolve the heart of stone, or take it altogether away! Do not doubt that the Ethiopian can have his skin changed by a power outside him and above him!

Further, know you this—*the Lord Jesus Christ has come to save the lost.* If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God. If you believe that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, you shall be saved. To put it in other words, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Or, to give you the whole Gospel as Christ told us to preach it, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." If you will come, not to *do*, but to have *all done for you*—not to *merit* salvation, but to *receive* it as a *gift* of God's free favor—if you will come just as you are, altogether without desert or anything to plead before God—and you will just say in your heart, "Lord, I adore the love which moved You to give Your Son to die for sinners, and I believe in the great Propitiation which He offered for sin,"

go your way, you are saved! If you thus believe, it is not only that you shall be saved, but you *are* saved.

Have you anything to trust to beside Christ? Then you are lost, for you have a mingled faith that is not of God's making! But if you wholly, solely, alone, heartily and entirely fix your hope on the blood and righteousness of Him whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation for sin—then you are saved and I know that your heart says, "Blessed be God for that! Now that I love God, what can I do for Him?" That is the way!

I noticed, yesterday, when I was talking to some 40 persons who had recently found Christ, that they were, all of them, either hard at work for the Lord, or they were asking what they could do for Him. Could I tell them something they could do for their dear Lord who had saved them? There is far more done out of love than there is out of law. We will not, cannot do anything to be saved, but, when saved, what is there that we cannot do? Live, and then do! Not, do and live. Live in Christ and then serve Him, but do not put the cart before the horse! Come, dear Friends, and trust in Christ. The Lord bless you by His Divine Spirit leading you to do so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *PSALM 78:9-72.*

This story of the children of Israel, after they came out of Egypt, is like a mirror in which we may, with great sadness, see ourselves reflected.

Verse 9. *The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.* They had every opportunity of serving their God. He had provided them with fit weapons for the war, but they were cowardly, so they "turned back in the day of battle."

10, 11. *They kept not the Covenant of God, and refused to walk in His Law; and forgot His works, and His wonders that He had showed them.* Let each one of us ask, "Does the Psalmist describe me?"

12, 13. *Marvelous things did He in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and He made the waters to stand as an heap.* What a marvelous miracle that dividing of the Red Sea was! Did it not make an abiding impression upon them? I will be bound to say that many of them said, "We shall never doubt God again." Yet, they soon did doubt, murmur and rebel against Him!

14-16. *In the daytime also He led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. He split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.* It seemed as if there was nothing that the Lord would not do for them—all that they needed for food and refreshment was given to them freely.

17, 18. *And they sinned yet more against Him by provoking the Most High in the wilderness. And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.* He had given them food for their necessities, but now they must have meat for their lusts.

19. *Yes, they spoke against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?* So you see, dear Friends, what speaking against God really is! I am afraid that we, also, have often done that. To question God's power is to speak against Him. Perhaps you have thought lightly of your unbelieving speeches, but God does not think lightly of them—to my mind it seems that there is hardly anything that so grieves Him as the doubts of His people concerning Him.

20. *Behold, He smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can He give bread also? Can He provide flesh for His people?* There ought to have been no question as to the Lord's power—the God who could fetch water out of a rock could, if He pleased, make loaves of bread out of the sand under their feet, or cause the very stars to drop with meat for them if necessary.

21. *Therefore the Lord heard this, and was angry.* He was really angry with His people because they doubted Him. He loved them and because He loved them, it cut Him to the quick that they should have questioned His power to bless them.

21-23. *So a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel because they believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation: though He had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of Heaven.* Unbelief is very hard to kill. God opens the doors and windows of Heaven to feed His people yet, nevertheless, the next time they are in trouble, they begin to stagger at the promise. Oh, shameful unbelief!

24-29. *And rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of Heaven. Man did eat angels' food: He sent them meat to the fullest. He caused an east wind to blow in the Heaven: and by His power He brought in the south wind. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: and He let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. So they did eat, and were well filled: for He gave them their own desire.* Yet that was not a blessing to them and, Brothers and Sisters, let us always be afraid of our own desire, unless that desire comes from the Lord. You know how David puts it in the 37th Psalm—"Delight yourself, also, in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart." If, however, you find your delight in any *earthly thing*, it shall be a plague to you to have the desire of your heart! "He gave them their own desire."

30. *They were not estranged from their lust.* For the more lust gets, the more lust wants. It is like the daughter of the horse-leech that always cries, "Give! Give!" God can satisfy the longing soul, but all the world cannot satisfy the cravings of lust.

30, 31. *But while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel.* They received what they pined for, but they had a curse with it. Affliction with a blessing is far better than prosperity with a curse!

32. *For all this they sinned still, and believed not for His wondrous works.* They were dyed ingrain with unbelief, so that it seemed as if it could not be washed out of them.

33. *Therefore their days did He consume in vanity, and their years in trouble.* A great part of our trouble is the fruit of our own unbelief. It is like hemlock in the furrows of the field. They who distrust God are making a rod for their own back and, before they have done with it, they will have to rue the day in which they thought themselves wiser than God!

34-36. *When He slew them, then they sought Him: and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the High God, their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter Him with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues.* Some men are like dull animals that will not go without the whip. Many of us cannot be kept right without constant affliction. If our God gives us a little smooth walking, we go half-asleep, or we trip and stumble. And so He is compelled, as it were, to make our way very rough, and often to strike us with the rod to keep us from falling altogether into sinful slumber. How many there are who, when they seem to turn to God in times of sickness, are not truly penitent! A death-bed repentance may be true, but, oh, what a risk there is that it may be false!

37-51. *For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His Covenant. But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not: yes, many a time turned He His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath. For He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passes away, and comes not again. How oft did they provoke Him in the wilderness, and grieve Him in the desert! Yes, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They remembered not His hand, nor the day when He delivered them from the enemy. How He had worked His signs in Egypt, and His wonders in the field of Zoan: and had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink. He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them. He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labor unto the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamore trees with frost. He gave up their cattle, also, to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. He cast upon them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. He made a way to His anger; He spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; and smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham.* This is what God did with their enemies who had oppressed them, that He might set His people at liberty. After all that, ought they not to have trusted Him as a little child trusts its mother, without ever a question or a doubt? While He thus overthrew their enemies, see what He did for His own people.

52-56. *But made His own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And He led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. And He brought them to the border of His sanctuary, even to this mountain, which His right hand had purchased. He cast out the heathen, also, before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. Yet they tempted and provoked the Most High God, and kept not His testimonies.* This sad note seems to come over and over again, as

if they never could have too much of grieving God. Yet the Lord was still tender towards them. Well may we sing—

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

57-64. *But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. For they provoked Him to anger with their high places and moved Him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, He was angry, and greatly abhorred Israel: so that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men; and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hands. He gave His people over, also, unto the sword; and was angry with His inheritance. The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage. Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation.* They were dumb with excess of grief. When God chastises His children, He does not play at it. Sometimes, when He is angry at their sin, He lays on the blows fast and heavy till their very bones are broken, so that they may hate sin as God hates it, and seek after holiness even as God loves it. So, dear Friends, I pray that if any of us have lost the consolations of God and are feeling the weight of His rod, we may begin to inquire what secret thing it is in us which has angered Him, and go back to Him, and seek to stand before Him as once we did. For, otherwise, He will smite, and smite, and smite yet again and again. But notice that the Lord never delights in chastening His children. He is glad to have done with the necessary correction. So, when their enemies were most cruel with them—

65-69. *Then the Lord awakened as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouts by reason of wine. And He smote His enemies in the hinder parts. He put them to a perpetual reproach. Moreover He refused the tabernacle of Joseph and chose not the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Zion which He loved. And He built His sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which He has established forever.* You see that we are getting into clear water now—it was all broken water, storm and hurricane, while we heard of what Israel did—but when we come to deal with God in Christ, of whom David is the type, then how sweetly everything goes!

70-72. *He chose David, also, His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: from following the ewes great with young He brought him to feed Jacob, His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.* Blessed be God who puts away the sin of His people, because He delights in mercy!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—489, 474, 448.

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

A WARNING TO WAVERERS
NO. 2537

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"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." James 1:6, 7.

THE Apostle James was always very practical. He never really differed from Paul, but, whereas Paul dwelt more upon the doctrinal side of the Truth of God, James, who has given us but one Epistle, dwelt more upon the practical. I should not have wondered, if Paul had taken up the same subjects as James did, if he had written in the same style. At any rate, we are very grateful to James that he is so downright, so straightforward, so plain and practical. He never minces matters. He hits the nail on the head every time. Whenever he talks about faith, he seems to be saying all the while, "Believe." If he discourses on prayer, you can hear him crying, "Pray!" And if he speaks concerning holy living, you can hear the thunder at the back of his words commanding us to forsake sin and to follow after righteousness!

In the passage before us, the Apostle is dealing with the matter of prayer, but not with that, alone, for, while the verse previous to my text is about a man praying and, therefore, James says, "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering," yet the verse *following* our text is *not* about prayer, but about a man's general life—"A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." Therefore I shall try to show you, first, that the text speaks of *the great necessity in prayer,* namely, decided faith. And then I shall use the text as pointing forward to that which follows it, and speak to you concerning *the great necessity in life,* namely, decision of character for the Lord.

I. To begin, then, the Apostle James first speaks of THE GREAT NECESSITY IN PRAYER. If we would pray successfully, we must have a decided faith.

There should be, first of all, a very decided conviction in our own minds *as to the desirableness of the thing that we are asking for.* "Why," says one, "that is self-evident! Would a man pray if he did not thoroughly desire what he asked of God?" My reply is that I am afraid a great many people ask for what they do not really desire—and they would be taken aback if God were, at once, to give them what they have asked for! There is a man who says that he has been praying for a new heart, but then he does not intend to give up frequenting the bars, nor will he leave off associating with his bad companions. Well, if God could give such a man as

that a new heart, all of a sudden, and he could still retain his love for his old evil habits, he would be likely to kneel down and pray to have it taken away again, for he would be very uncomfortable with such a burden as a new heart and a right spirit! That is not what he truly wants.

Some men pray to be made holy, but they wish to keep some little pet sin in the backyard. They do not really want what they are asking for—they are not yet convinced of the desirableness of the thing that they profess to be seeking. Men and women pray that they may be saved, but if we explained to them what it is to be saved, they would pray, "Lord, do not save us—at least, not just yet! We must have a little more of the world. We have some unholy engagements that we must keep—we do not want to be made religious people just at present." In all probability, the more they understood of what salvation really is, the less they would think of praying to be saved.

A man kneels down, and says, "Lead us not into temptation," and he gets up and goes straight away to a place where temptations swim all around him. What is he but a self-deceived man asking for a thing which he practically proves that he does not wish for? He prays, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." Within five minutes of so praying, he says, "I will never forgive that fellow! I hate him for what he did and the longer I live, the worse I shall hate him." Will a man thus mock God? Will he so trifle with his Maker? Alas, how many do! If you must insult someone by your mockeries, go and insult your equal—your king if you dare! But to go and insult your God—can you commit such a terrible sin as this? Yet many do it. If they complain that their prayers are not answered, they have no right to complain, for such people must not expect to receive anything of the Lord. They are wavering even as to the sincerity of their prayer! Their own wish is not intense enough or intelligent enough to be really their settled desire. They waver even on the threshold of the House of Mercy—how can they expect to succeed in their business with the great Lord of the house?

Further, wavering may be seen in some persons *as to the fact of God's hearing prayer at all.* Possibly they are not even sure that there *is* a God, or, if that Truth of God is believed, yet God's *existence* is to them a matter of great obscurity. They know little about Him and do not care to know any more. "Yes," they say, with a kind of languid assent which they have not the moral courage to refuse, "no doubt there is a God"—and they are a little proud to think that they are not atheists as some people are—"Yes, there is a God, but does He really hear prayer as a man hears the requests of his fellow men? And does God actually attend to the prayer so as to be affected by it and to grant the desire of His creature?" If, my dear Friend, you have been led to question this Truth of God, you must not expect to receive anything of the Lord, for, "he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." If either of these is a moot point with you, you might as well stand upon a hill and whistle to the wind, as go up into your chamber and bow your knee in prayer! You are a waverer about matters in which a man must not waver if he expects to be successful in pleading with God! Your fulcrum is not fixed, so you cannot have any effectual

leverage in prayer. This must be a settled and fully-believed fact, that God *is*, and that He hears and answers prayer. You may not be able to make out how that is consistent with His fixed purposes and it is a blessing that you need not try to make it out. The way to Heaven is not by explaining riddles, but by believing Revelations. The way to Heaven is not through the cleverness that can spell out an enigma, but through the simplicity that believes in God who cannot lie. It is true that God's eternal purpose is fixed, do not doubt that—but it is equally true that the Lord listens to the voice of a man and that whatever we ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive.

Furthermore, there are some who very greatly spoil their prayers because they waver *as to God's granting the specific thing which they are seeking at His hands.* You know, dear Friends, that there is a way of praying in which you ask for nothing *and get it.* I have heard that kind of praying even in public Prayer Meetings. It was a very good prayer, indeed, containing many admirable phrases—a prayer that was very well put together—I seem to have heard it ever since I was a boy. But there is no real prayer in it and that is the fatal flaw in it. It would be a capital prayer if it were a prayer at all—it has all the makings of a prayer—and yet it is no prayer! It is just as though you might see in a shop window all the garments of a man, but no man wearing the garments! Now, such a prayer as that never succeeds with God because He does not play at hearing prayer though far too many play at praying. It is earnest work with God and it must be downright business work with us.

Suppose you go into a bank and stand at the counter, and say, "I want some money." The clerk says, "How much do you want, Sir? Please put the amount down on this check." "Oh, I do not want to be specific! You can give me a few hundred pounds, but I do not know to a sixpence exactly what I want, I am not sure that I could put it down in black and white." You will get no money at all that way! But if you write down in black and white exactly how much you want—spell it in letters and put it down, also, in figures—the clerk will give you the money if you have so much in your account at that bank. So, if you have an account with the great God—as, blessed be His name, some of us have—go and ask for what you want!

The Apostle James says in the chapter we read, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." If a man asks of God *riches*, that is not what He has promised to give! If he asks of God good health, that may be granted to him but, still, the promise is concerning *wisdom*, and that is what the man needs! Therefore, let him with all his heart pray, "Lord, give me wisdom." I think our prayers would succeed much better if we were not so wavering about what it is that we really require, and if we were not dubious as to whether God could give us that very thing.

You, dear Friends, are in a fix—you do not know which way to move. Happily, you have forgotten your troubles the little while you have been in the House of Prayer, but tomorrow morning the first thing you will say to yourself will be, "What am I going to do today?" Do you believe that God can give you wisdom and that He will do so if you ask Him? Then go at once to Him and say, "Lord, this is what I need." Specify your needs.

State your exact condition. Lay the whole case before God with as much orderliness as if you were telling your story to an intelligent friend who was willing to hear it and prepared to help you. And then say, "Lord, this is specifically what I think I need, and I ask this of You believing that You can give it to me."

If it is wisdom that you need, it will be essential, when you ask for that wisdom, that you decidedly believe that this Book, through which God teaches us wisdom, is really Inspired, so that what it teaches is distinctly and unquestionably true—and is received by you as the utterance of Infallibility. Ask of God in the full belief that it is so, or else I do not see how you can pray to be guided. Moreover, the Author of the Bible is prepared to teach you concerning the things which are written in this Book and it is essential, when you ask for wisdom, that you should believe that the Holy Spirit is able to enlighten you and is willing to instruct you concerning those things which now perplex you. Go, then, to God in prayer, believing in His Word and believing in His Holy Spirit.

God also teaches men sometimes by Providence. He guides their way as otherwise it could not have been directed. Believe in the Providence of God, in the overruling hand of God everywhere in everything and, believing that, go upon your knees and say to Him, "Lord, give me direction. Give me wisdom by Your Word, by Your Spirit, or by some other means in Your gracious Providence, and I will bless Your name for it." But, mark you, when you go to God asking for wisdom, you will not get any help from Him unless you are prepared to follow the guidance of that wisdom when He gives it to you. Many people, when they ask advice, have long before made up their minds what they mean to do. It is not infrequently my lot, as pastor, to be consulted by some persons about marriage. I am very careful as to what I say upon that matter because I am pretty sure that, long before they ask my opinion, they have decided whom they mean to marry. In the case of marriage with ungodly persons, they only come just to salve their consciences, meaning, all the while, to do what they know is wrong.

Now, dear Friends, do not go to God in that fashion—having made up your mind already what you mean to do! "Lord," says one, "help me to do right in this business." And he means to do right if it will not be too expensive. "Lord," he says, "keep me upright in this transaction." And he means upon the whole, preferably, to be upright—if, if, if—if there is anything to be made by it. He would sooner get the money honestly than the other way but, still, he means to make money somehow! Well, that kind of praying is impudence, and worse than that—it is an attempt to flatter the Oracle to take the responsibility of iniquity off your shoulders—and that will never do when God Jehovah, the All-Glorious One, is the Oracle to which you appeal! No, there must be in our cries to God a firm belief in the power of prayer, a firm conviction of the truth of Revelation and a strong resolve that whatever the Lord bids us do, we will do it, for only to the man who keeps His Commandments and delights himself in the Lord, will God give the desires of his heart. If you will not listen to God's Word, neither will God listen to your word when you come to Him in prayer.

II. Now I want to gather up all my strength and to ask the special attention of all of you who are undecided, while I speak about THE GREAT NECESSITY IN LIFE, that is, decision for God and for His Truth.

What is indecision? Well, first, *it is a thing which permeates the lives of many men.* I could describe some of them and they would probably think that I was very personal. I wish that they would believe that I mean to be exactly so! They wish above all things to be Christians, especially on Sundays, but they have some associates whose company is particularly pleasurable—and when they are with them, they studiously avoid anything that looks like religion! I have seen them among Christian people and they are very cautious, for they would not like to be thought worldly. And I have seen them among worldly people and they are very cautious there, too, for they would not wish to be thought to be Christians! They highly approve of a religious book, but then, as some men like a little rotten cheese for the taste of it, so they like just a flavoring of bad literature because they must know what is in the world—and that rottenness has to them rather a pleasant flavor.

As for prayer, of course that is admirable—they are glad that their wives pray, they would be delighted to hear that their children pray and they, themselves, do pray—but not very often. They do it when they are obliged to, just as some ships put into harbor when there is rough weather about. They are upright in business, nobody can find much fault with them in that respect. They only rob God, *that is all*—and God being of no particular consequence to them, they act just as they like towards Him. Imagine, dear Friends, that you can see a pair of scales and you have a good illustration of what these waverers are like. Look, that scale slowly gets to a balance and, by-and-by, the wrong side goes down, and the right side proves to be short weight! That is how it is with these people—they would and they would not—they are, "to good and evil equal bent."

And, according to the mood in which you catch the man, he is either a devil or a saint! He can speak very prettily when, after a service, he is questioned about his conversion. He says that he is very much obliged to the friend for being so careful about his soul and he hopes that there is some good thing in himself toward the Lord God of Israel. If one from the opposite camp were to accost him in his shop and say, "You go to a place of worship, don't you?" he is such a coward that, though he might not actually tell a lie about it, he would sail wonderfully near the wind and you might think, from what he said, that he was much more often at the theater than at a House of Prayer!

This is the kind of man who is undecided and, in describing him, I take leave to tell him that his *condition is one of immorality.* Nothing can be more immoral than for a man to know the right, yet not to follow it and so far to admit the importance of that right as well-near to yield to it, and yet to do such despite to God and to his own conscience, as not to yield to it at all, but to be drawn aside by altogether opposite influences! If a man were to say, "Well, I am undecided upon the question of honesty," I would be very decided about locking up the spoons! If there should be a woman who said, "I am very undecided about the question of

purity of morals," I would know that she was no better than she ought to be. There are some things about which a man must not be undecided—you must not be undecided about being chaste, about speaking the truth—and you cannot be undecided about serving God without being guilty, in that very indecision, of manifest treason against the majesty of Heaven! I pray every undecided man to give himself his true character and that will not be a good one. It will be written out in large letters, "You are in an immoral state as long as you are halting between two opinions." Christ reckons that the man who is not with Him is against Him! He who does not serve Christ is opposing Him. There are no "betweenites"—none can dwell on the fence. You are either in Immanuel's land, or else you are in the dominions of Satan—you can be sure of that! If not right, you are wrong! If not a friend of Christ, you are His enemy!

This condition of things is also *very dangerous.* There are some persons here for whom I always pray whenever I enter the pulpit and see them here. There are some not here, as I see by their not being in their places, for whom I think no Sunday has passed over my head for years without my breathing a prayer for them. And still they are not saved. I have seen some very strange persons who had never come in before and they have been converted the first time they have attended this place. But these other people have been here, some of them for 20 years, and they are not a bit nearer than they were at first because they have always seemed so near. They still appear very promising, but it never comes to anything. Everybody who knows them says that within a very short time they will come forward and confess Christ, but a *very long time has already passed* and they have not done so yet because they do not know Him in their heart and, therefore, they cannot confess Him with their mouth. You know that when a man is an out-and-out black sinner, you can aim at him and hit the mark the first shot—but these people who are a sort of whitey-black, or a kind of blackey-white—you do not know which they are! It might have been white originally, but certainly it has been smoked nearly black. Or it may have been originally black, but it has been certainly bleached to look like white. These undecided people somehow baffle us. We cannot get at them and meanwhile they get confirmed in that wretched condition—and there is no doing anything with them. It is a very, very dangerous position for a man to occupy.

O my Friend, if this is where you are, I pray you not to sit down at ease in such a state as that! As well might a man go to the edge of Shakespeare Cliff at Dover, and lie down to sleep there, and feel himself perfectly safe, when in a moment he may be dashed to pieces at the foot of the rock! O Sirs, will you stay where you are? You are on a volcano! It will burst before long to your destruction. Therefore, escape for your life!

Our text also tells us what this indecision is like— "He that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." Like a wave of the sea! Well, a wave of the sea is very *unrestful.* You see it come rolling up from a distance. On, on it sweeps and never stops! Out on the broad Atlantic, what a life a wave seems to have—never still—never for a second in one place. Now up like a mountain, then down again like a great abyss! Such is the life of the undecided man—he does not know where he

is—and you do not know where to find him. He is never quiet, never still, never at rest. A man who gives himself up to the devil gets a kind of dead peace within him. His conscience being seared as with a hot iron, he is still. This is quite different from the state of the Christian who gives himself up wholly to his Lord and who, therefore, enters into a delightful heavenly peace which continually deepens and increases. The man who is always shilly-shallying, playing at see-saw all his life, knows nothing of real rest. He does not make even the best that can be made out of the devil—he gets nothing worth having from either one side or the other—so he is a wretched creature, indeed!

The Church will not acknowledge him and the world is suspicious of him. I am always glad when the world turns out a person of this character. When I was pastor at Waterbeach, a certain young man joined the Church. We thought he was an excellent young man, but there used to be in the village, once a year, a great temptation in the form of a feast, and when the feast came round, this young fellow was there in very evil company. He was in the long room of a public house in the evening, and when I heard what happened I really felt an intense gratitude to the landlady of that place. When she came in and saw him there, she said, "Halloa, Jack So-and-So, are you here? Why, you are one of Spurgeon's lot, yet you are *here*? You ought to be ashamed of yourself! This is not fit company for you. Put him out the window, boys." And they did put him out the window on the Friday night—and we put him out the door on the Sunday—for we removed his name from our Church-book! Where was he to go? The world would not have him and the Church would not have him. If he had been all for the world, the world would have made something of him—and if he had been all for Christ, Christ would have made something of him. But as he tried to be a little of each and so nothing to either, his life became a wretched one! As he walked the streets, people pointed at him with scorn. The Christians turned away, thinking him a hypocrite, as I fear he was, and the worldlings called him so, and made his name a by-word and a proverb. Oh, you who are neither for God nor the devil, nobody will respect you long! They cannot!

You fancy, just now, because you have money in your pocket, that you are a very respectable person. But you are a disreputable person and the world itself says that you are! And you will find it out, yourself, before long—and you will be unrestful, like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

The undecided man is also like a wave of the sea, *unstable.* Yonder great wave seems to form a pyramid—look how it towers aloft! It is a wonderful sight, but while you are admiring it, it is gone. It was only made of water and it has disappeared into its own element. So are there some people who appear to be excellent and admirable, but they are undecided and their goodness is as the morning cloud and as the early dew—it soon passes away.

They are also *uncertain.* That wave that is rolling away yonder, where will it end? Will it sweep across the Atlantic till it reaches the shore of America? Look, there comes a north wind and it turns towards the icebergs! But another wind blows and now the wave is rolling towards the

coast of England. It is in a perpetual whirl, just as the winds happen to drive it—and we have many people of that uncertain kind—"driven with the wind and tossed."

These undecided persons, too, are like the waves of the sea because they have *no inward vital principle.* A wave of the sea is dependent upon the wind that comes to bear it on. There may be a great force in the waves, but even that is not mighty enough to stand against the rough gale—they are "driven with the wind and tossed." And look at some of you! There has only to be a bit of a breeze and see how you are driven by it. You sang with us just now, "Happy day! Happy day!" Yet, perhaps, tomorrow evening you will be at a social party where there will be jesting at religion and some questionable witticisms—and you will laugh at them as loudly as others will. And if somebody does charge you with being on the other side, you will stutter, stammer, blush and, at last, you will say something that all the while you do not like to say. Yes, you are "driven with the wind." There are some fellows six feet high if they did but stand upright, yet anybody can twist them whichever way he likes.

For my part, "I had as well not be, as live to be in awe of such a thing as I myself." What does it matter to me what a mere man's opinion of me may be? Nothing whatever! If a thing is right, I believe it, say it and try to live it. And if others also think that it is right, so much the better for them, but if they think it is wrong, it is none the worse for me when I have once learned to stand on my own legs. But there is a certain class of people who always stand on other people's feet. They ask "Mrs. Grundy" what is the proper thing to do. If they move in West-End circles, they would sooner die than be out of the cruel bondage that is called, "fashion." If they live at the East-End, there is a rough sort of fashion there, and they cannot stand against it. They are "like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." I should have an unutterable contempt for all such people if I did not feel an earnest desire that they might yet possess a living, powerful principle, and begin to stand alone in the power and energy of the Divine Life which God gives to all of those who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ.

The worst of these wavering, undecided people is that, like waves of the sea, though they are creatures of circumstances, yet they have a *great force for evil.* Those waves of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed, sink many a gallant ship and devour many a brave mariner—and these unstable people have an influence by which they carry many away. They half wish that they were not themselves carried away, yet they are. There is something good about them, but there is also something so bad that they sweep others on with them to destruction! Perhaps they are bearing their own children away by their indecision, so that they, too, will grow up undecided—and generation after generation may be cursed by their wicked hesitation. God grant that they may not continue in this evil condition a single moment longer!

In closing, what shall I say to you who are undecided? I pray you think whether you have not been undecided long enough. Remember that the question you have to decide is by no means a difficult one. Whether you shall serve God or Satan, whether you shall live with Christ

in Heaven or lie among the lost in Hell forever—these are not questions about which there ought to be any choice! Decide, then, foolish waverer! If you are a Believer in the Scriptures, a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior of men, decide to follow the teaching of those Scriptures and to accept that Savior—and decide at once! May God help you to decide very speedily! All this while you are robbing yourself of happiness, robbing God of glory, robbing His people of your help, you are even robbing this poor wicked world of what little you might do for its benefit, robbing your family of a holy example, robbing your entire life by letting its best days go for nothing. It is time, then, you were decided! O Lord, bring these waverers to decision, for Your dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C.H. SPURGEON:
JAMES 1.

Verse *1.* *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.* According to the teaching of some in the present day, the Apostle should have said, "To the two tribes and the ten that are lost," but he does not say so, nor does Scripture say so. "To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greetings."

2. *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations.* Or, "trials." This is a strange thing to say, is it not? Should we not count it great joy when we *escape* from trial? Perhaps so, but we are expressly told to count, or reckon, it all joy when we fall into divers trials. Have you never known what it is, in times of peace and quietness, to feel as if you missed the grandeur of the Presence of God? I have looked back to times of trial with a kind of longing, not to have them return, but to feel the strength of God as I have felt it, then—to feel the power of faith, as I have felt it, then—to hang upon God's powerful arm as I hung upon it, then, and to see God at work as I saw Him then. I think the mariner at home must sometimes feel a kind of longing to once more enjoy a storm on the ocean and to see how the good ship rides on the billows' crest. Life gets flat, sometimes, while all goes smoothly, and we need even the variety of a trial to bring us to close dealing with our God. It is so much for our good to be tried, it is so much for the glory of God that we should be tried, that we will read the verse again and note what the Apostle says—"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers trials." Be like the soldier who is not afraid of the shot and shell, and the turmoil and strife of the battle!

3. *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience.* That is a gem of the first water, well worth finding even if you have to dig in the mines of trial for it.

4. *But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* This is true Christian perfection, when every gracious quality is present, and present in perfection! If you have a child, it is a great joy to you to find the child perfect as a child—with no sense deficient, no limb missing and every part rightly formed. Oh, that we may all be such Christians—"perfect and entire, wanting nothing!"

5. *If any of you lack wisdom.* That is the point in which we are all deficient and if we are to be wanting in nothing, we must not be lacking in wisdom. How, then, are we to obtain it?

5. *Let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him.* Young beginner, you who have but lately put on Christ, you certainly do lack wisdom—you cannot have attained that gift in all its fullness as yet—then go to God for it! He can give it to you and he *will* give it to you if you ask Him for it.

6, 7. *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.* It ensures failure in prayer when there is not a decided faith in the one who prays—and it ensures failure of the whole life if there is not a decided determination to serve the Lord.

8-11. *A double minded-man is unstable in all his ways. Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass, he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withers the grass, and the flower thereof falls, and the grace*—Or, "beauty."

11. *Of the fashion of it perishes: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.* No matter how luxurious may be his mode of living, no matter how admirable may be his taste, he shall certainly fade—and all that he has will fade, too. And if this is all that can be said of him, that he is a rich man—he is a very poor creature, indeed.

12. *Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him.* For that is the purpose of our trials—that we should be made to love Him more and love him better. This is that Divine Grace which shall win "the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him."

13. *Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts He any man.* That is to say, if God permits or sends temptation to any man, it is not an inducement to sin. In that sense, God tempts no man. Those temptations which are said to come from God are *trials or tests*. In *that* sense, God *does* tempt all His people, even as it is written, "God did tempt (or, prove) Abraham." He tries and tests them, that they may see and that He may see, whether their faith and their profession is genuine or not, even as the Angel of the Lord said to Abraham, after the trial of his faith, "Now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me."

14. *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.* This is the essence of an evil temptation—a man's own lust.

15. *Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.* There you see the egg, the larva and the full-grown fly of sin! "Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death."

16. *Do not err, my beloved brethren.* Do not err about anything, but, especially do not err about this matter of temptation, where you may so easily make a blunder. "Do not err, my beloved brethren."

17. *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* Ascribe all evil to yourself, to the world, or to Satan—but ascribe all good unto God. "Every good gift and every perfect gift"—every grain of goodness, every trace of excellence that there is in the world comes from Him—but no evil ever comes from Him.

18. *Of His own will He begat us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.* It is a very delightful idea that we are presented to God as "a kind of first fruits of His creatures." There is a whole harvest behind us, as Paul also reminds us in Romans 8:19-21—"For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope, because the creature, itself, also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

19, 20. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger: for the anger of man works not the righteousness of God.* Therefore, when we are tempted, let us not be in a hurry to pronounce a verdict on the temptation. If we are slandered and evilly spoken of, let us not be quick to reply, or to grow angry. Let us be slow—very slow—to anger. It will be our wisdom, for no good comes of human anger. "The anger of man works not the righteousness of God."

21. *Therefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness and receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls.* Receive it as a graft. As the tree is prepared by the knife to receive the new shoot that is to be put into it, and so does receive it as to make it its own, and to use it for its own fruit-bearing purposes, even in that way "receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls."

22-24. *But be you doers of the Word, and not hearers, only, deceiving your own selves. For if any is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was.* The best thing to do when you look into a mirror, and spy a spot on your face, is to wash it off. The true use of hearing the Word, or reading it, is to amend one's self at once in those points in which the Word discovers us to be faulty. To look in the mirror and not to wash off the spots is but a piece of vanity. And to hear a sermon, or read a chapter, and not to put into practice what we are taught is a sad waste of time.

25. *But whoso looks into the perfect Law of liberty and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.* There are many who complain of their short memories when they are hearing sermons. Well, then, let them be quick about *doing* what the sermon bids them, and then they will not be forgetful hearers. You have heard how one good woman described the effect of the sermon she has heard. She was one who washed wool and when her minister went round to ask her what she had learned on the previous Sabbath, she did not even remember the text. "Oh, Janet," he said, "I am afraid you are a forgetful hearer! I cannot see what good the sermon has

done for you." So she took him to the back of her house where she had a pump—and she worked at the handle while she held underneath the spout a sieve full of wool that was dirty and foul. The water ran through the wool and through the sieve, and all ran away. "There," she said, "this sieve is like my memory. But, Sir, though the water does not stop in the sieve, it washes the wool—and what you preach, though it does not stay in my memory, it has washed my heart and cleansed my life and conversation." Never mind about keeping the water in the sieve so long as it washes the wool! No man can be said to be a forgetful hearer who is a doer of the work that he is bid to perform!

26. *If any man among you seems to be religious.* You know what that means and there are some who do seem to be wonderfully religious. Butter would not melt in their mouths, as we say, they are so solemn. "If any man among you seems to be religious."

26. *And bridles not his tongue*—That little noisy troublesome member. "And bridles not his tongue."

26. *But deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain.* If religion does not salt your tongue and keep it sweet, it has done nothing for you. If the doctor wants to know the state of your health, he says, "Let me see your tongue." And there is no better test of the health of the mind than to see what is on the tongue! When it gets furred up with unkind words. When it turns black with blasphemy. When it is spotted with lasciviousness, there is something very bad inside the heart, you may be quite sure of that!

27. *Pure religion.*—It might be rendered, "Pure ritualism."

27. *And undefiled before God and the Father is this.* What is pure ritualism according to the Inspired Apostle. To wear a white surplice and to change it for a black gown? I do not see that in the Scriptures. To have little boys in white to sing for you? I do not see that. What I do see is this—

27. *To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world.* I should like to have such a surpliced choir as this—a company of Christian men and women robed in unspotted holiness! We shall have such a choir as that around the eternal Throne of God, so they who wish to be there had better begin to practice the music here! The Lord help you to do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—797, 658, 788.

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

AN EPISTLE ILLUSTRATED BY A PSALM
NO. 2538

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 10, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
In connection with the dedication of the Jubilee House, which commemorated the completion of the beloved Pastor's 50th year, June 19, 1884.

"You have pushed me violently that I might fall: but the LORD helped me. The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation." Psalm 118:13, 14.

In memory of my 50th birthday, our friends have built a house at the back of the Tabernacle, to be used for the purposes of the Church, and to be called JUBILEE HOUSE. It will be a lasting Ebenezer bearing this witness, "Hitherto has the Lord helped us." I was asked to select a text of Scripture to put upon a stone which all could read and, thereby, be made to understand the meaning of the house and its name. The chosen text of Scripture (Psalm 118:13-18) was cut into a stone after a fashion, but the words were not set forth in full—the mason thought it sufficient to inscribe the chapter and the verses. Now, as people do not generally carry their Bibles with them to refer to, this appeared to me to be a failure. I like a matter made boldly clear, so that he may run that reads it! Therefore, I have had the words, themselves, engraved upon a large slab of marble, to be read by all of our day and by coming generations, also. I believe that such memorials silently work for lasting good and the more of them the better. In this case, at least, if there are not "sermons in stones," there will be texts of sermons, which is even better.

The passage which is thus made conspicuous is a truthful summary of my personal experience in reference to the faithfulness of God. It may seem to be a long inscription, but I could not afford to give up a line of it. David wrote of himself and I can appropriate every word as descriptive of God's dealings with me. Let me read the whole of it in your hearing—"YOU HAVE PUSHED ME VIOLENTLY THAT I MIGHT FALL: BUT THE LORD HELPED ME. THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH AND SONG, AND HE HAS BECOME MY SALVATION. THE VOICE OF REJOICING AND SALVATION IS IN THE TABERNACLES OF THE RIGHTEOUS: THE RIGHT HAND OF THE LORD DOES VALIANTLY. THE RIGHT HAND OF THE LORD IS EXALTED: I SHALL NOT DIE, BUT LIVE, AND DECLARE THE WORKS OF THE LORD. THE LORD HAS CHASTENED ME SORELY, BUT HE HAS NOT GIVEN ME OVER TO DEATH."

You may not see why this Scripture is strikingly suitable to the occasion, but I see it most clearly and, as it is my own testimony, I will endeavor to make you sympathize with me in it by explaining it. I would say to you, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name forever."

A life so full of the loving kindness of the Lord should yield more praise to God than any one tongue can possibly utter. "The Lord has done great things for us, thereof we are glad." Let us, therefore, praise Him with all our hearts!

Christian experience is the richest product of Grace and it ought to be laid at the feet of the Well-Beloved from whom it comes, and to whom it belongs. What God has done for one of His people is an indication of what He will do for others of His chosen. The Lord's Providences are promises and His benedictions are predictions. To be silent concerning the loving kindness of the Lord is a robbery of the worst kind—it is taking from our God the glory due unto His holy name.

Some are afraid to tell what the Lord has done for them—lost men would count them boastful and proud—but this is usually quite a groundless fear. A sense of the goodness of God tends to humble a man and to make him lie low at the feet of his Savior. The more conscious he is of the Grace that has been so richly bestowed upon him, the more will he realize his own unworthiness of such abounding mercy. The best of men have continually to endure severe heart-troubles and to mourn over inward failures, so that when they tell how the Lord has delivered them with His right hand and His holy arm, there is little in that confession to minister to self-conceit. The wine that is pressed from the grapes of Christian gratitude will never cause anyone to be intoxicated with pride.

It may also be remarked that many of those who never bear witness to the goodness of the Lord are quite as proud as they could very well become and, therefore, the evil of self-exaltation would seem to be a natural weed which grows on any soil. Our business is to pull up the weed and not to lay the blame of its existence on what is a harmless and even a beneficial thing. If a dim eye is apt to be dazzled with light, that is no reason why every man should put his candle under a bushel. To kill one evil by encouraging another is a doubtful gain and a sure loss. Dear Brother, if the Lord has dealt well with you, publish it to the honor of His name and to the strengthening of your brethren! God has not blessed you for yourself, or given you bread that you may eat your morsel alone! But He intends that everything He entrusts to you should be employed for the good of all your brethren. It were a pity that a householder should be too modest to feed his family, or a Christian so much afraid of egotism as to refuse to cheer his fellow travelers.

I would stir up all experienced Believers to speak well of the name of the Lord. Do not conceal the loving kindness of the Lord. It is too much our nature to tell out our sorrows—let us not be silent as to our joys. If we fall into a little trouble, we run from one to another and repeat it till it eats into our souls like a burning acid. We do not let the funeral bells be still, but the marriage peals lie quiet year after year. Let us be eloquent upon our mercies and silent upon our miseries! Why should we have a shout for our complaints and scarcely a whisper for our thanksgivings? Shall we leave behind us no memorials but gravestones? Generations gone before us have cheered us into confidence by the records which they have left behind of the Lord's great goodness—shall we not, also,

bequeath a testimony to our descendants? Do we mean to pass on to them a flying roll written within and without with lamentations? Shall they inherit a dreary desert of unbelief? Far from it! We will write them songs of praises to be sung upon their stringed instruments from century to century! We will engrave upon eternal brass the inscription, "The Lord is good, and His mercy endures forever, and His truth throughout all generations!"

We now come to the first verses of our chosen inscription—"You have pushed me violently that I might fall: but the LORD helped me. The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation." David remembered his past conflicts—the scars were in his flesh. I will handle the text in the way which the Apostle points out to me in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, at the third, fourth and fifth verses—"Tribulation works patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope makes not ashamed." First, in my text, I see *tribulation and patience.* "You have pushed me violently that I might fall." In the second place, I see *patience and experience.* "But the LORD helped me." And in the third place, I see *experience and hope that makes not ashamed.* "The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation."

I. First, then, in the text I see TRIBULATION AND PATIENCE—"You have pushed me violently that I might fall."

Perhaps, in that word, "you," David points to all his enemies as if they had been so united in their hate and so undivided in their attacks, that he looked at them as one single person. If they had not one neck, they were guided by one head and excited by one heart. Yet David had many enemies—so many that in another place he compares them to bees compassing him about. It may be for the information of some who have lately become Christians, if I tell them that as surely as ever they are the followers of Jesus, they will find themselves the object of enmity. That same Master who has come to make men peaceable, also says in another sense, "Think not I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." In bringing in peace, we necessarily contend with the contentious. In establishing righteousness, we inevitably wage war against injustice and oppression. Truth must always strive against error and holiness must battle against sin. Do not expect to be wafted to Heaven on the wings of fame—you may have to force your way there in the teeth of slander!

Our pilgrimage may cause us blistered feet, for it is no holiday trip, but a stern march. It is an up-hill journey to Glory and that man had need be a hardy mountaineer who resolves to ascend into the hill of the Lord and to dwell in His Holy Place. You will be attacked on all sides—yes, even from within. Your own household may furnish you the most desperate of your foes—yes, your own bed may supply the cruelest adversary. From every corner an arrow may be aimed at you. In work and rest, in the world and in the Church you may be called upon to draw your sword! Strange is it that we may do the maddest actions and awaken no opposition—but the moment we become truly wise, all men

are up in arms against us! Is there nothing to ridicule in all the world save the fear of God? Many of God's people, both in private life and in public stations, find that their piety acts upon the ungodly as a red rag upon a bull—they close their eyes and rush fiercely to the attack. The ribald throng no sooner catch sight of a Christian than they cry, "Here is a target for our witticisms. Let us be sarcastic with him."

If you do not meet with that kind of persecution, yet you will have to endure affliction and temptation in the world. He who is born for the Crown is bound for the Cross. A thousand snares are laid in your path and only He who made you a Christian can cover your head and carry you safely through the bombardment which awaits you. "They compassed me about like bees," says David. That is to say, they were very many and very furious. When bees are excited, they are among the most terrible of assailants. Their stings are sharp and they inject a venom which sets the blood on fire. I read, the other day, of a traveler in Africa who learned this by experience. Negroes were pulling his boat up the river and as the rope trailed along, it disturbed a bee's nest, and in a moment the bees were upon him in his cabin. He said that he was stung in the face, the hands and the eyes. He was, all over, a mass of fire, and to escape from his assailants he plunged into the river, but they still persecuted him, attacking his head whenever it emerged from the water. After what he suffered from them, he said he would sooner meet two lions at once, or a whole herd of buffaloes, than ever be attacked by bees, again! So that the simile which David gives is a very striking one.

A company of mean-spirited, wicked men, who are no bigger than bees, mentally or spiritually, can get together and sting a good man in a thousand places till he is well-near maddened by their scorn, their ridicule, their slander and their misrepresentation! Their very littleness gives them the power to wound with impunity. Such has been the experience of some of us, especially in days now happily past. For one, I can say, I grew used to falsehood and spite. The stings, at last, caused me no more pain than if I had been made of iron! But at first they were galling enough. Do not be surprised, dear Friends, if you have the same experience. Look for it and when it comes, count it no strange thing, for in this way the saints of God have been treated in all time. Thank God the wounds are not fatal, nor of long continuance! Time brings ease and use creates hardihood. No real harm has come to any of us who have run the gauntlet of abuse—not even a bruise remains.

But I do not think that this is quite all that the Psalmist meant. He intended to point out some grand adversary who had led the attack—"You have thrust sore at me." Perhaps it was Saul. Perhaps Ahithophel. Perhaps his own son, Absalom. In our case, we remember no adversary but Satan—"you"—I think I see him now before me. That dread fallen spirit, the arch-enemy of our souls. "O Satan, you have thrust sorely at me!" Many a child of God must utter this exclamation. It is no fault of Satan's if we are not quite destroyed! It is not for want of malice, or subtlety, or fury, or perseverance on the devil's part if we still hold the field! He has met us many times, using all kinds of weapons, shooting from the right

hand and from the left. He has tempted us to pride and despair, to care and to carelessness, to presumption and to idleness, to self-confidence and to mistrust of God! We are not ignorant of his devices, nor inexperienced in his cruelties. He has fixed himself in our memory so that we recognize him and cry, "You have thrust sorely at me."

I know that I am addressing many saints of God who can use David's language with emphasis—"You have pushed me violently that I might fall," for I dwell among a tried and tempted people. The battle between the soul of the Believer and the devil is a stern one. No doubt there are multitudes of inferior spirits who tempt men and tempt them successfully, too, but they are much more easily put aside by godly men than their great leader can be. Apollyon is master of legions and possesses the highest degree of power and craftiness. He who has once stood foot to foot with him will know that Christian was, indeed, hard put to it in the Valley of Humiliation, when the dragon stopped the pilgrim's way and made him fight for his life. Bunyan says—"In this combat no man can imagine, unless he has seen and heard, as I did, what yelling and hideous roaring Apollyon made all the time of the fight! He spoke like a dragon and, on the other side, what sighs and groans burst from Christian's heart. I never saw him, all the while, give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceived he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword. Then, indeed, he did smile and looked upward—but it was the most dreadful sight I ever saw."

No Christian will find much to smile at while he is contending for his faith, his hope, his life with this most cruel of foes! Messengers of Satan buffet us terribly, but Satan, himself, wounds desperately. Therefore we are wisely taught to pray, "Deliver us from the Evil One." Single combat with the arch-enemy will strain every muscle of the soul and pain every nerve of the spirit. It will force the cold sweat from the brow and make the heart leap with palpitations of fear and thus, in some degree, bring us to our Gethsemane and make us feel that the pains of Hell have gotten hold of us. This prince of darkness has a sharp sword, great cunning of fence, tremendous power of aim, and boundless malice of heart! And thus he is no mean adversary, but one whom it is a terrible trial to meet. In his dread personality is contained a mass of danger for us poor mortals and, as we think of our experience of him in the past, we cry with emphasis, "You have thrust sorely at me!"

Carefully notice that while David thus speaks of one enemy, he indicates *the subtlety of his attack* by the language which he uses—"*You have* thrust sorely at me." That is not a cutting with the edge of the sword, but a piercing with the rapier, a stabbing with a dagger! A practiced soldier may guard himself against the full swing of the sword, but the rapier leaps in all of a sudden and reaches the heart. Armor protected the ancient warrior from the sword, but the thrust found out the joint of the harness and penetrated the body. Thus Satan deals with us. We stand upon our guard against him and we fancy we have shielded ourselves at all points from head to foot. We watch him, for we are not ignorant of his devices, And when he smites, we turn his blow aside. Again falls his

stroke and we ward it off, but just when we half think that we may rest a minute, the rapier is thrust in and the blood flows! Ah, me, I have heard of a ruler who, in olden times, wore armor all day and all night long for a full year, for he was aware that an assassin dogged his footsteps. But it grew burdensome to wear this heavy suit continually, so he took it off and within five minutes he was stabbed and dead! Mind that you never remove your armor, for the foe who seeks your destruction watches you so carefully that he will perceive your momentary carelessness.

Even with your armor on, you may not be secure, for he knows where the joints are, where one piece of the harness fits into another and how to give his thrust where it will count. O God, if Your servants are kept throughout life secure from such a foe as this, how they will glorify Your blessed name! In each case where, "that Evil One touches him not," the Lord will have a grateful minstrel to sound forth His praise eternally, even as I do this day!

Remember, also, dear Friends, that the *design of these assaults is most malicious*. The objective of the enemy is to make us sin—"You have pushed me violently that I might fall." That is, either that I might fall from my upright walk in true doctrine, or that I might decline from my first love, or, worst of all, that I might stumble into open sin and dishonor my profession. Satan would not be content for us to stagger—he desires that we fall. He has fallen and he would hurl us down if he could. This he especially desires for those who take the lead in the Church of God. If they were seen to fall, the devil would publish the wretched news through all the streets of Hades! The triumphant shout, "A champion of God has fallen," would be heard both on earth and in Hell and it would cause great rejoicing! If, in this warfare, "The standard-bearer falls, as fall full well he may," for I never heard, yet, of a more deadly fray, then the wish of Apollyon will be gratified and his wretched soul will feel as much of satisfaction as its misery can know! Oh, what a mercy to be kept standing where the ground is so slippery, where so many have fallen, where we, ourselves, are so apt to slide, and where such cunning foes are ready to push us down!

What gratitude we owe to Him who has given His angels charge concerning us, to keep us in all our ways! How earnestly should we adore Him who has kept us from falling and who will still do so till He presents us faultless before His Father's face! In the course of 50 years, many have been the times when my feet had almost gone—and I cannot forget them. I remember traveling in the Alps over a road that they called Hell Place because the rocks were so terribly smooth that neither men nor mules could get sure foothold. I was glad when that bit of the road was passed, even as I am this day happy to have come so far on my journey. "When I said, my foot slips; Your mercy, O Lord, held me up." I would at this moment bless the Lord who keeps the feet of His saints.

II. I turn from the first to the second head, that I may speak of patience and experience—"You have pushed me violently that I might fall, but the LORD helped me."

It would be well to set those words to music and let the whole congregation of the faithful sing aloud with glad hearts, "But the Lord helped me." The bass would sound well from a venerable Brother who would roll it forth ponderously, "The Lord helped *me.*" And many an aged Sister would take another part and sing, in a higher key, *"The* Lord helped me." Fathers and mothers, who have had a large family of children about them and have, by a hard struggle, brought them up, will each one sing, "Hitherto has the Lord helped *me,*" while the lone sufferer will sing, "I was brought low, and He helped *me*." The younger Believers, though they have not gone so far on the journey, have, nevertheless, had their share of trial and of Grace—they also can each one say, "The Lord helped *me*." Let it go round the assembly, till every child of God has added his note and the enemy, in his deep abodes, can hear us shout exultingly, "You have pushed me violently that I might fall: but Jehovah helped me!"

Helped me to what? Well, helped me, first, *to believe,* for David evidently had trusted in the Lord and found it better than trusting in man. Satan makes a special attack upon our faith. If he could destroy it, he would have captured the citadel of our spiritual life. But this he cannot do. Faith is a dear child of the Holy Spirit and He that creates faith will not desert it, but keep it as the apple of His eye. He gives more Grace and increases our faith! He enables us to trust our God and to hold fast by His way. It is He who has helped our faith to "laugh at impossibilities and say, 'It shall be done.'" In the dark hour, the Lord has given us to see by faith and in the storm He has made us to ride the billows by faith. That is the great matter, for so long as faith survives, hope is not sick unto death! I do not doubt that some of you wonder to-night that your faith has survived the putrid skepticism of the age, the stagnant atmosphere of indifference, the foul air of heresy which surrounds all things. If it were possible, the enemies of Christ would deceive the very elect, but the godly live by faith!

Next, the Lord has not only helped us to believe, but He has helped us *to pray.* When David was brought low, then he prayed, and from this holy practice we have never desisted, though tempted many a time to do so. Long waiting for an answer has been an inducement to many of you to cease from pleading. But, like the poor importunate widow, you have pressed your suit and now you are able to bear witness that it is no vain thing to wait upon the Lord! Who was it that kept you pleading? Was it not the Lord who helped you to continue in prayer? You would soon have heard the devil say, "Behold, he has ceased to pray," if the Lord had not daily led you to the Mercy Seat and enabled you to plead, there, the sprinkled blood. The fire of devotion would have been quenched by the black fiend who threw water upon it if it had not been secretly kept alive by One who was hidden behind the wall and secretly poured oil upon the flames! Men do not cry to their Heavenly Father, in their closets, unless the Divine Spirit draws them into this hallowed communion! Jacob wrestled with the Angel because the Angel wrestled with him. When the Holy Spirit creates in us the inwrought prayer, it is sure to be an effectual prayer—but the ineffectual prayers of our own unaided spirit are such

failures that we are soon induced to give them up. Help in prayer is the best of help! God never fails that man in public whom He has strengthened in private. So long as our infirmities are helped by the Spirit in prayer, we may rest assured that they will also be helped in all other respects. When blind Samson began to pray for strength, it was a sign that, notwithstanding all that the enemy had done against him, he was yet to win a great victory and declare again that the Lord had helped him!

Surely, this text also means that as the enemy tries to make us fall, so God has helped us *to stand.* O child of God, if you have maintained your integrity. If with all your losses you have never been unrighteous, but have been honest before God. If, under slander you have not lost your temper, nor rendered railing for railing. If, when much tempted of the devil, you have still said, "Get you behind me, Satan," and have strived against him, then you are ready with all your heart to Bless the Lord who has helped you! The way of the upright is beset with snares and he who has run therein for many years without stumbling is, indeed, favored of the Lord!

When I think of some professors of my acquaintance who have grievously defiled their garments, I hope that they will be saved, but I know that it must be "so as by fire." This reflection makes me pray God that others of us and especially that I, myself, may be graciously preserved so that we do not transgress. How can we stand, so feeble, so encompassed with infirmity and tempted in so many points, unless our God shall help us? Hitherto He has helped us and, therefore, we look forward to the future with a joyous confidence!—

"He who has led will lead
All through the wilderness.
He who has fed will feed.
He who has blessed will bless.
He who has heard your cry
Will never close His ears.
He who has marked your faintest sigh
Will not forget your tears.
He loves always, fails never.
We rest on Him today, forever!"

Beside that, God has helped us *to fight.* "You have thrust sorely at me," says David, "But the LORD helped me." Helped him to do what? Why, to thrust back, again, quite as sorely against his spiritual foes! He says of the bees, in the verse to which we have referred, "In the name of the Lord will I destroy them." Some of us can thank God that we have kept our fighting arm in trim till this very day. A bow of steel is broken by our arms even now. We have not changed our testimony for Christ, nor cast away our confidence which has great recompense of reward. We have been sorely put to it by the Rationalists of the age, but still we have held up the Gospel and nothing but the Gospel! And still we cry, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Dear Brothers and Sisters, take care that when the battle rages you do not stand altogether on the defensive. Carry the war into the enemy's country! Let us not only hold our own, but seek to win souls for Christ! Let us put Satan

on the defensive—it is much better for us to attack him than to be attacked by him. Let us give him cause to look to his own domains, that he may not have so much force to spare for his onslaughts upon us.

When poor Christian was down under Apollyon's foot, his life was nearly pressed out of him, but he saw that as God would have it, the sword which had fallen out of his hand was just within his reach. So he stretched out his hand and grasped that, "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," and therewith he gave his adversary such a terrible stab that he spread his dragon-wings and flew away! Oh, to give the fiend such a stab as that! Let us proclaim the promises! Let us proclaim the Gospel! Let us publish everywhere the Free Grace of God—and in this way we shall turn the battle to the gate and cause those who pursued us to be, themselves, pursued. Hallelujah for the Cross of Christ! We bear it forward into the ranks of the foe, confident of victory! Our courage fails not, neither does our hope wax faint—the Lord who has helped us is the God of victories! "The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

III. I will conclude this meditation with the third head, which is, EXPERIENCE AND A HOPE THAT MAKES NOT ASHAMED.

What says the voice of experience? "The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation." When you are home, I wish you would read the song of Moses which the children of Israel sang at the Red Sea. You will find that these words are borrowed from that grand old song. One of our proverbs says, "Old songs and old wine are the best." Certainly they lose nothing by age and we may truly say of this blessed verse that it is all the sweeter because there is a ring of Miriam's timbrels about it—and we note the sound of dancing feet as we read the words! Hear you not the glorious shout, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The Lord is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation"? Come then, Brothers and Sisters, let us sing this song upon our stringed instruments all the days of our lives!

First, *our God has become our strength.* We are weak enough, but what a power is His! He is our strength to suffer, giving us patience. He is our strength to work, working in us, with us, by us. He is our strength to fight, for it is He that girds us for the battle. The Lord is our strength—what an unfailing fountain of force! Did you say, just now, "I will speak no more in the name of the Lord"? Did you complain of being dull and weak? Have you forgotten where your strength lies? Did you allude to your own native strength? Indeed, that is utter weakness! Complain of it as much as you please, for in *you* there is neither power nor wisdom! But would it not be wise to remember that your real strength is the Lord? "The Lord is my strength." In such a case, weakness is lost, and I can say, with Paul, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

Did I hear you say, my dear Sister, that you would have to give up that Bible class because you do not feel equal to it? What do you mean by being equal to it? Why, that you do not seem to have the personal strength! That is no news! It is well that you remember it and are emptied of your former self-reliance! Still, believe that in you there is no spiritual power

and turn at once to the Strong for strength! When a man is called to any holy work, the sooner he is persuaded that he is not, of himself, equal to it, the better! But, at the same time, it will be well for him to receive that further persuasion—"The Lord is my strength." If the Holy Spirit takes possession of a man, or a woman, what can they not say? What can they not do? The Lord can take up the poorest worm among us and make him thresh the mountains till they become like chaff! Let us, therefore, sing this charming sonnet with all our hearts, "The Lord is my strength." I will rely in no degree upon oratorical power, or human learning, or natural gifts, or acquired aptitude, or on anything that I have, but I will rest in the Lord alone. Brother, when God is your strength, you are girt with Omnipotence! Go to your work, whatever it may be, and believe in the Lord as to your ability to perform it.

A Negro slave used to explain what practical faith meant in this manner—"Why, Massa, if de Lord say, 'Sam, jump tro' that wall,' all Sam got to do is to jump; it's God's part to get him tro' the wall." Just so. He who gives the command will justify it by enabling us to obey it if we give our whole hearts to the doing of it. If God bids you do what is quite beyond your strength, it is yours to proceed in the way of obedience—and God will enable you to accomplish His bidding. He never did send His soldiers on a warfare at their own charges and He never will. He will supply His armies with rations, and weapons and ammunition—you can be you sure of that. He does not reap where He has not sown, nor gather where He has not strewed. He is the Lord All-Sufficient when we are most insufficient. With Him for our strength, we cannot faint, or fail, but, on the contrary, we shall renew our force and rise continually to something higher and better than before.

Notice the next word, our *God has also become our song*. "The Lord is my strength *and song*." I find that the commentators refer this to the period after the battle, so that it may mean, "The Lord is my strength while I am waging the war, and my song when I have won the victory." This is an excellent sense, but another seems, to me, more clearly in the words, "The Lord is my strength and song." Both are in the present tense—we sing while we fight! When Cromwell's men marched to battle, singing a grand old Psalm with one accord, the battle was half won before they struck a blow! Their hearts were fortified and their arms were strengthened by their song. Do you desire a far nobler example? Your great Lord and mine, when He went to His last tremendous conflict where the powers of darkness marshaled all their strength against Him, and He strove until He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood—how did He go?

Here is the answer, "After supper, they sang a hymn." After they had sung a hymn they went out into the Mount of Olives, that is, to Gethsemane—He went to His agony singing! That brave heart was about to be deserted by His friends and even forsaken of His God, but into that deadly contest, wherein He must be cast into the disgrace and dishonor of scourging and shameful spitting—even to that, our Champion went with a song upon His lips because the Lord was His song! So, my Friends, while we are working, let us sing! You will do your work much

better if your hands keep time to a cheery strain. While we are fighting let us sing and plant our blows while we chant our hallelujahs—

"Ever this our war cry—
Victory, victory!"

Let us claim the victory, anticipate it and shout it while yet we are contending! On our beds let us sing God's high praises and magnify Him in the midst of the fires! Set your whole lives to music. Make your entire career a Psalm. Let not your life be a dirge, as it is with some, who, from morning till night, are mournfully wailing miseries. Let us not moan out, to the tune, "Job"—

"Lord, what a wretched land is this,
That yields us no supply!"

But let us lift up our voices to some such jubilant hymn as this—

"The men of Grace have found
Glory begun below!
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow.
Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry!
We're marching through Immanuel's ground
To fairer worlds on high!"

But what shall we sing about? Well, "The Lord is my song." Sing the Father and His eternal love. Sing how He chose His people and made them His own before the earth was. Sing the Son of God, whose delights were with the sons of men before He came here to dwell. Tell how He took our flesh to take away our guilt. Tell how He died and rose again, and led captivity captive, and ascended up on high! Tell how He will surely come again to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords when the earth shall ring with welcome hosannas at His glorious appearing! Make that your song, but do not forget to sing the Holy Spirit's love. Magnify the Holy Spirit, the Illuminator, Comforter, Guide, abiding Advocate and Paraclete. You will never need to cease from this song, for, "this God is our God forever and ever! He will be our Guide even unto death." Glory be unto the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit!

Whenever I grow very dull through pain, or heavy through lack of sleep, I say to myself, "I will note down what I owe to God of praise, which I cannot just now pay to Him, that I may do so when I get a little better." And then my conscience chides me, saying, "Praise Him NOW! Bless God for aching bones! Bless God for a weary head! Bless God for troubles and trials, for he who can so praise the Lord is singing a truer and more acceptable song than youth, health and happiness can present!" A seraph never praised God with an aching head. Cherubs never blessed the Lord upon a sick bed—so you will excel even the angels if you magnify the Lord in sickness! Why should you not, since you also can say, "The Lord is my strength and song"?

The close of the text says, "and *He has become my salvation.*" Brothers and Sisters, after all our experience, we know that there is salvation in none but the Lord. If we have not any experience because we only began to believe in Jesus Christ five minutes ago, yet we know that He has become our salvation. The moment we trust the Savior, we are saved. But I

want you to consider this little sentence and so to believe it intelligently. What do I mean when I say that you are saved? If you believe in Jesus, you are saved from the guilt of sin. Yes, bless God for pardon! But do you not know that you are also saved from the *power* of sin? The dominion of sin is over! It lives like a snake with its head broken. It wriggles and writhes, but its head is crashed! The power of sin in every Believer is overcome—there is no sin from which we cannot escape. There is no evil habit that we cannot cast off if we are really saved. The Lord has become our salvation from all sin!

"Alas," cries one, "I have to endure very fierce temptation." Temptation in itself cannot harm you if you do not yield to it. And you need not, for the Lord has become your salvation! Temptation is, "the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." "Oh, but I am so poor and I am so sick, and I am so tried in a thousand ways!" Never mind, you are saved from all the evil which is in these trials! Affliction cannot hurt you—nothing of that kind can do you any injury, for the Lord has become your salvation. "Oh, but think of the dark, black night which may come over us in the future!" Never fear—He who has become your salvation will be your light. You are as safe in the dark as in the light, if the Lord has become your Helper. "But I have to die." Bless God for that! It were not worth while living if we could not die! It is the very joy of this earthly life to think that it will come to an end! What would a sailor say who was on a voyage that would never bring him to a port? What would a traveler say if he was toiling along a road which would never bring him home? Blessed be God, we shall come to the pearly gates, by-and-by! Let us not be alarmed about that, for the Lord has become our salvation.

We are saved from death—we cannot really die! We shall fall asleep, to wake up in the likeness of our Lord. Blessed sleep! Who does not long for it? "He has become my salvation," not for a time, but forever—my sure salvation, my eternal salvation! Therefore, take courage and let us go forward in our walk and warfare, for this is our note of victory, as it was the hymn of Moses and the children of Israel at the Red Sea, "The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him." Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen.

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

[This sermon was the first in a series of four delivered by Brother Spurgeon in connection with his 50th birthday in 1884. The second was #2539; the third was sermon #*2237—Volume 38* and the fourth was sermon #2540.]

THE JOY OF HOLY HOUSEHOLDS
NO. 2539

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 17, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
In connection with the dedication of the Jubilee House, which commemorated the completion of the beloved Pastor's 50th year, June 19, 1884.

"The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."
Psalm 118:15, 16.

A BELIEVER in Christ is not long without finding joy. He is in the land which flows with milk and honey and he will get a sip of sweetness very soon. Like Nicodemus, he comes to Jesus in the dark, but the sun is rising. When he casts himself at the foot of the Cross, his dawning has begun and, before long, he will walk in the Light of God—being justified by faith, he will have peace with God. And not only so, for he also learns to joy *in* God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also he has received the Atonement. This joy is in him and abounds, so that he belongs to a happy people. It is true that all Believers are not equally happy, but they have, each one of them, a right to be exceedingly glad. Some float upon a flood-tide of joy, while others drift upon the ebb, but they are all in the same stream and it is bearing them on to the ocean of perfect happiness. All who trust in Christ as they ought to do, will find a measure of this joy springing up within them, keeping company with the new life which the Holy Spirit has created. Ours is peace which passes all understanding and joy unspeakable!

This joy is contagious—it spreads like a sweet perfume. The happy man makes others happy. The man who is full of the blessedness of God overflows for others. Music is not alone for him who makes it, but for all who have ears. The happy man's influence is first felt at home—he goes home to his own family a converted man and they soon perceive the change. He tells them of what the Lord has done, but even if he did not do so, they would soon discover by his gentleness, his love, his truth, his holiness, that something remarkable had happened to him! His actions, his words, his temper, his spirit are singularly altered and those around him can see it! He is glad and, before long, they are glad, too. When the man is better, everybody who belongs to him is the better for his improvement. When the man's own heart rejoices, he distributes joy, even as Christ's disciples when they received bread and fish from the hands of their Lord, divided them among the multitude, "and they did all eat, and were filled." I trust that many of you, dear Friends, who are my associates in the Church of God, feel this to be true in your own cases, as I am

sure I must confess it to be true in mine. To the glory of God's Grace I must give the testimony. Our own God of blessing has blessed our families.

Certain Believers, however, spread joy through a large number of families—not only those to which they belong according to the flesh, but among all the families of Zion they scatter comfort! David, for instance, when he went forth and smote the enemies of his nation, caused great rejoicing in all the tabernacles of Israel. All the chosen people shared in what the champion of the Lord had done. When any man is blessed of God so that he can teach the Word, and preach it with power, he sheds joy over all the families with which he comes in contact. Aspire, dear Brothers, to shine widely, as a candle set upon a candlestick gives light to all that are in the house! First, see to it that you are truly saved, yourselves, then cry to the Lord for your own kin and labor for them till they are all brought to the Redeemer's feet!

And then let your light shine throughout the neighborhoods wherein you dwell. It is a poor lamp which cannot be seen outside its own glass. Shine down that street from which so few ever go up to the House of God! Shine in that factory where the mass of the workers sit in darkness! Shine in that bank where few of the clerks are walking in the Light of God! Pray that you may be not merely night-lights to comfort some one sick person, but like those new gas lamps which are placed at the crossroads and make a grand illumination all round! It may be that the Lord has placed you in a trying position on purpose that you may be of more service than you could have been under more comfortable circumstances. We ought to be happy to be where we can make others happy. It should be our will to do the Lord's will by being useful to our fellow men. We must not value our position according to the ease it brings to us, or the respectability with which it surrounds us, but by the opportunities which it affords for overcoming evil and promoting good.

I think that many Christian people would be wise to hesitate before they move from the place where they now are, even though it would be very agreeable to them to live in a more reputable locality. I say that they might hesitate to relocate because if they were gone, the very Light of God in the place would be quenched and the hope of many poor sinners would be removed. Salt can never do so much good in a box as it can effect upon meat which otherwise would corrupt. A pilot on shore may be very clever, but he cannot be useful unless he goes to sea. A river is a blessing in England, but it is beyond measure prized in Egypt or the Sudan. The Scriptures speak of "rivers of water in a dry place." Let us pray that we may be such men and women that we may bless our own households and then may be so located in Providence that, to the utmost of our capacity, we may be channels of blessing to an ever-widening circle of which we are the centers. Oh, for a share in the benediction which fell on Abraham, "In blessing I will bless you." And again, "I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing." And yet again, "And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

We will now press more closely to the text and we notice in it, first, that *there is joy in the families of the righteous.* The text says so and ex-

perience and observation confirm it. And secondly, *this joy should be expressed.* "The *voice* of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous." Then, thirdly, *this joy concerns what the Lord has done.* "The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

I. First, there is JOY IN THE FAMILIES OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

Thank God that is divinely true. Once, Paradise was man's home and now, to the good man, his home is Paradise. I may say that, to some extent, *this is in proportion to the salvation that is found in the family.* If one or two persons are converted out of a large family, it is a thing for which to praise God, that He takes "one of a city and two of a family," to bring them to Zion. Yet the joy will be rather a soft melody than an exulting harmony. If the wife shall be converted as well as the husband, what a comfort it is to them both! Now will two parts of the music be taken up and the hymn will be more sweetly sung. If two horses in a chariot pull together, how well it rolls along, but if one backs and the other pulls, there will be discomfort, if not mischief. I have seen two oxen in a yoke and I have marked how the true yoke-fellows seek to accommodate each other, so as to lie down together, rise together and move in step together. Where it is not so, the pain and inconvenience make it hard plowing.

If the husband and the wife are both converted, a larger joy is yet within their reach, for they will begin to pray for their children. Those who are born to them will be their anxious care till they are also born unto God. They will have great delight when one of their dear ones says, "I have given my heart to Christ," and is able to express his faith in Jesus and to give a reason for the hope that is in him. It will further fill their cup of pleasure when another comes, saying, "I would be numbered with Christ's flock." Many among us can say, "All my children are children of God—they go with me from my table to the Lord's Table. I have a church in my house and all my household are in the Church." Here is a picture, a pattern, a paragon, a paradise! We may say what a minister of Christ once said of his spiritual children, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the Truth of God." It is better, dear father, dear mother, that your boys and girls should he heirs of God than that you should be able to make them heirs of a vast estate! It is better that they should be good than great. Better that they should be gracious than famous.

If they are married to Christ, you need not fret about finding them husbands—and if they serve the Lord, you need not worry about their businesses. While you live, they will be your comfort, and when you die, you will leave them in better hands than your own! Their future is well secured, since it is written, "Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth." I think it is generally true that the joy in a family is very much in proportion to the Grace which is in its members. Circumstances and peculiar trials may cause exceptions to the rule, but in the main, it will hold good. Seek, then, the salvation of the whole of your household!

Here it would be a sad omission if I did not say that it is a greater joy when the saved circle includes not only the parents and the children, but

the servants, also. A gracious, faithful servant is a great comfort. And to be surrounded by those who fear the Lord is one of the choicest blessings of this mortal life. We ought not to be content, so long as a single domestic in our house is unconverted. The nurse-maid, the girl who comes in for part of the day, the boot-cleaner and all who are employed occasionally for extra work should be thought of by the mistress and the fellow servants. We should pray that all who set their foot over our threshold may have a name and a place in the house of our God. Why should it not be? May we not often chide ourselves that we have been forgetful of those who minister to our comfort? Oh, that all who serve us may serve God! May all who wait at our table, eat bread in the Kingdom of our Father! And may all who dwell under our roof have a place in the many mansions above!

Now we advance a step and remark that the joy which is here alluded to, is *mainly spiritual*. To fear God tends to make a man happy in every way—mentally, physically, socially, as well as spiritually. It is light to the eyes, music to the ears and honey to the mouth. It is universally a sweetener. The ordinary work of life runs easily when the wheels are oiled with Divine Grace. It should be an ambition that our house should be a temple, our meals sacraments, our garments vestments, ourselves priests unto God and our whole life a sacrifice to His praise. There are households where the Lord Jesus is the Master both of master and servants—and the Holy Spirit is the presiding Spirit in the whole economy of the house. Difficulties that disturb others never occur there, for love prevents them. All are gracious. All are anxious to be good, to do good and to get good. Consequently, jars and strifes are unknown. Little differences are never allowed to grow into disputes. Envying, bickering, clamor and evil speaking are put away. Though these spring up even among those who are of the same kin, yet gracious hearts will not tolerate their existence. Each pays due consideration to each—proper places are kept according to New Testament rule and the result is that the Angel of the Lord is in the house, the devil sees the mark upon the door and dares not enter—

"Blessed is the man that fear
And delights in the Lord!
Wealth, the wealth which truly cheer,
God shall give him for reward.
And his children,
Shall be blest around his board."

Yes, the chief joy in the tabernacles of the righteous is a spiritual one! A joy of the father because he is saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. A joy of the mother because she, too, has had her heart opened, like Lydia, to hear and to receive the Word. A joy of the dear children as they offer their little prayers and as they talk of Jesus, whom their soul loves. I do not know that I ever have a greater joy than when, sometimes, I have to receive a whole family into the Church! Five came to see me at one time, from one house—quite a company of boys and girls. It is delightful to see our beloved offspring early in life giving their hearts to the Lord! Happy mothers, happy fathers, happy brothers, happy sisters where the Lord works so graciously! May you long continue to praise

and bless His name for this singular blessing, if you are partakers in it! I know none of my father's family, or of my own, who are unsaved and, therefore, I can lead you in the song!

This kind of joy, while it is spiritual, is *not dependent upon external circumstances.* It hangs not on wealth or honor. The joy of the Lord will be found in the palace of a prince, if the Grace of God is there, but far more often it flourishes in humble cottages and lowly rooms where Christian men are dwelling who toil hard for a livelihood and often feel the pinch of poverty. They said of old that philosophers could be merry without music and I am sure that it is still truer of Christians that they can be happy in the Lord when temporal circumstances are against them. Our bells need no silken ropes to set them ringing, neither must they be hung in lofty towers! If our joy depended upon heaping together gold and silver, or upon the health and strength of all the members of our family, or upon our rank and pedigree, we might go to our beds weeping and awake in the morning blinded with tears. But as our joy springs from another well and the precious drops of it distil from a purer fountain, whose streams flow both in summer and winter, we can bless God for a constancy of satisfaction! Steady is that flame of joy which burns in the tabernacles of the righteous, for it is fed with holy oil. God grant that we may never dim its luster by family sins towards God, or by negligence in our duties to one another—but may the sacred lamp of holy joy continually shed its radiance upon us from generation to generation! May it be said of our habitation, "Jehovah Shammah"—"the Lord is there."

I heard of a wealthy man who had a large number of houses in various places. He owned a fine estate in the country, surrounding a magnificent mansion. He kept up an establishment at the West-End, a retreat by the seaside and a shooting-box in the Highlands—and he would often travel on the Continent. He wandered from house to house and was never known to stop more than a few weeks in any one residence. He told a friend that he was trying to find peace of mind in some one or other of his houses. What a vain quest! He might as soon have found the philosopher's stone, or the universal solvent! I have known many persons who had only one room and that but poorly furnished, yet they found peace of mind there because they carried it about with them!

Happy is the man who wears the emerald of peace upon his bosom, even though it is not set in gold. Blessed are they whose peace is like a river, having a source far away in the hills and a stream clear as crystal, continuous, ever-deepening, ever-widening, moving silently onward toward the ocean of boundless happiness! Yes, it is not *where* we are, but *what* we are. And it is not what we have, but where we have it—whether we have it in ourselves or in our God—that proves whether we are truly blessed. Peace is the best possession for an individual, the richest estate for a family and the fairest legacy for descendants. Where the salvation of our Lord Jesus comes, peace and joy are sure attendants! Therefore is it said in our text that "the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous." Made righteous in character, we may more than ever feel the temporary nature of our earthly sojourn and so may dwell rather in tabernacles than in mansions. But we are honored by the com-

panionship of these two heavenly guests—salvation and joy—and, therefore, we envy no Caesar on the Palatine Mount, no monarch in his palace of marble!

Christian joy, whether in the individual or the family, *can be abundantly justified.* Believers can always give a reason for the joy which is in them. As Christian households, why should we not be glad in the Lord? If God is pleased with us, we may well be pleased with Him. If the Lord rejoices over us, ought we not to rejoice in that fact? God Himself calls us a happy people—let us not live as if we would falsify His Word. See, my Brothers and Sisters, whatever your temporal troubles may be, all things are working together for your good—may you not, therefore, rejoice evermore? Though every drug that is put into the mixture may be bitter, yet the whole potion is salutary. Though each event may seem to be against you, yet the whole course of Providence is for you in a Divinely wise and gracious manner. Nothing occurs in your family history, whether of birth or death, of coming or departure, of loss or of gain, of joy or of sorrow, of sickness or of health, but what shall produce, in the end, the highest good! Judge not each wheel, but watch the outcome of the whole machinery. To me, it is a happy thought that not a grain of dust in the March winds, nor a drop of rain in the April showers, is left to chance, but the hand of the Lord directs all! And therefore I am confident that neither in the little nor in the great shall anything really harm the man who dwells under the protection of the Most High.

Beside this, we rejoice in forgiven sin. This is the first blessing of which David sings in the 103rd Psalm and it is the preparation for all the rest. If sin is pardoned, all bitterness is past, for this is the real wormwood and gall of life. Now that Goliath of Gath is smitten in the forehead, the rest of the Philistines are of small account. When sin is gone, the black cloud which threatened an eternal tempest is removed and the sun scatters the rest of the clouds as it disperses the morning mist. Even death has lost its dread when sin is gone—it is a bee without a sting and we look to find honey near it! If it comes into the house and takes away our dear ones, they are with Christ, which is far better! And when it bears us away, our death will be gain, for, "so shall we ever be with the Lord." As the whole of life receives another color when sin is pardoned, so does Death, itself, look otherwise to the Believer in Jesus! That solemn business is so altered that we may even—

"Long for evening to undress,
That we may rest with God."

What is there on earth to trouble you who fear God? "Why," you say, "we could tell you of a thousand trials!" Yes, but when you had done, I would tell you that there was no ground for being troubled about any one of them, for it is written, "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper." "No good thing will he withheld from them that walk uprightly." And again, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or to come; all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." "They are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them." Therefore, let us take care that we are not as the Egyptians when they shivered in the darkness

which might be felt, but rather as the people were in the days of Solomon, when they ate and drank and made merry, and peace was without end.

I would ask any of you young people who are newly-married and just starting in life, how can you expect happiness unless you seek it in God? You have given your hearts to one another—oh, that you had given your hearts to Christ as well—for then you would be joined in One from whom you can never be separated! If you are one in Christ, you will have surer grounds of union than natural affection can afford. There will be a brief separation of the body when one of you is taken Home, but you will meet again and dwell forever in the same Heaven. Unions in the Lord are unions which have the blessing of the Lord. See to it that you begin as you mean to go on, namely, with that blessing which makes rich and brings no sorrow with it. If your home is to be happy, if the children that God may give you are to be your comfort and your delight, first let your own souls be right with God. If the Lord is the God of the parents, he will be the God of their seed. The God of Abraham will be the God of Isaac and He will be the God of Jacob, and He will be the God of Joseph, for He keeps His faithfulness from generation to generation of them that love Him. He does not cast off His people, nor their children, either. If you are an Ishmael, what will your children be? If you are far from God, how can you hope that your posterity will be near to Him?

To return to my first point, the people of God are a happy people and their families are happy families. If I have any Christian person here who complains, "I am not happy at home," I would like to inquire, "Is that your own fault, dear Friend?" No, do not be angry, I am bound to ask the question, for I often find that those who complain of unhappiness in their own homes are the main cause of that unhappiness! Most creatures see according to their nature and men often get into their bosoms what they measure out to others. When I meet a man who cries, "There is no love in the Church," you may turn that expression into plain English and read it thus, "There is no love in *me*." When a person says, "Everybody at my home is wrong except myself," you feel sure that he has kept his eyes open to the faults of others, but has never really seen himself! If you wear colored spectacles, all things around you will be colored.

"Alas," cries another, "I am not happy, though I long to be so." Do you know, dear Friend, the secret of obtaining happiness? The answer is very simple—do not attempt to make *yourself* happy, but endeavor to make others so. Be cheerful and cheer those about you. I bless God that I never fell into the delusion that there is virtue in a rueful countenance. Some may think it well to be "miserable sinners," but surely it is better to be happy saints! Carry sunshine about with you in all ill-weather. Do not think that in godliness, *drive* will be equal to *draw*. A frown may benefit a few, a smile will influence more. A famous French statesman had such a dreadful countenance that a boy once asked him whether his face did not hurt him. Surely some very "proper" people might be asked the same question, for they habitually wear such gloom about them that one would think that all was night within! Let it not be so with us, but let the light of the love of God be round about our path causing flowers of cheerful-

ness to spring up on every side! There are enough weeping willows by all our streams—I would they were full of water-lilies. More Grace would enable us to glory more in the Lord and rejoice with more constant joy. So much for our first witness—there is joy in the families of the righteous.

II. Secondly, THIS JOY SHOULD BE EXPRESSED—"The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous."

We should put a tongue in our joys and let them speak! The voice should be heard daily, from morn till eve, and till the silence of sleep steals over all. But it should never fail to sound forth *in the daily gatherings for family prayer.* It should be a happy occasion when we meet to read the Word of God and to pray together. It is well if we can also sing at such times. Matthew Henry says, concerning family prayer, "They that pray do well. They that pray and read the Scriptures do better. They that pray, read the Scriptures and sing a hymn, do best of all." Herein he was wise and gracious as usual. I wish that his words received more attention. If you cannot compass the last of the three good things, mix the praise with your prayer by making it more full of joy and thankfulness than is usual. Never let the domestic devotion degenerate into a dull formality, but throw a hearty living delight into it, so that there shall be joy in drawing near unto the Lord and not a weariness. Where there is no family prayer, we cannot expect the children to grow up in the fear of the Lord—neither can the household look for happiness.

Perhaps some of you have not begun family prayer, for you have only lately been converted. Commence it at once, if possible. Let not this day end without an attempt at it. But I hear a man say, "I never did pray aloud." Then begin at once, my Brother. "But I am afraid." Are you afraid of your wife? That assuredly is a great pity—I am very sorry for your manhood, for she is the last woman of whom you should be afraid! "Oh, but I should break down!" That might be no great calamity—a breakdown prayer is often the best form of supplication. May not this objection arise from pride? You do not like to pray before your family unless you can do it well and so receive their approbation. Shake off this spirit and think only of God, to whom you are to speak! Language will follow desire and before long you will have to be more afraid of your fluency than of your brevity. Only break the ice! Pray the Lord Jesus to cast out the dumb spirit and He will set you free from its power. If the husband will not lead the devotion, let the wife do it, but let no day pass without family prayer—a house without it is without a roof—a day without it is without a blessing!

Do you say to me, "Alas, dear Sir, my husband is not converted"? Then, my dear Sister, endeavor to have prayer with the children and pray, yourself. I remember, when my father was absent preaching the Gospel, my mother always filled his place at the family altar, and in my own family, if I have been absent, and my dear wife has been ill, my sons, while yet boys, would not hesitate to read the Scriptures and pray. We could not have a house without prayer—that would be heathenish or atheistic!

There will be frequent occasions for holy joy in all Christian families and these ought always to be used right heartily. Holy joy breeds no ill,

however much we have of it. You can easily eat too much honey, but you can never enjoy too much delight in God. Birthdays and anniversaries of all sorts, with family meetings of various kinds, should find us setting life to music right heartily. Moreover, it would be well *if our houses more generally resounded with song.* It drives dull care away, it wards off evil thoughts, it tends to a general exultation, for the members of a household to be accustomed individually and collectively to sing. Of course, there must be common sense in this as in all other things, but as worldlings are able to sing songs, we might, with no more difficulty, sing Psalms. I have known some very happy people who were always humming Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. I knew a servant who would sing when washing and she said it made the work grow lighter. It is a capital thing to sing when you are at work. Keep on "tooting" a little, if you cannot sing—that is a word I got from an old Primitive Methodist. I used to meet him in the morning. He was toot—toot—toot—tooting as he went along the road. When he was at work in the field, it was just the same. I asked him what made him always sing. He replied, "Well, I don't call it singing, it is only tooting—but it is singing to me, it is singing in my heart. I sing in this fashion because I feel so happy in the Lord. God has saved me and put me on the road to Heaven, why should I not sing?" What a noise we sometimes hear from the wicked when they are serving *their* god! They make night hideous with their songs, and shouts, and blasphemies! Then why should not we make a joyful noise unto the Lord our God? I recommend you to try, in your own houses, to literally Praise the Lord with your voices in holy song.

If you really cannot sing at all, yet the voice of rejoicing and salvation may be in your tabernacles *by a constant cheerfulness,* bearing up under rain and poverty, losses and crosses. Do not be cast down, beloved child of God, or, if you are, chide yourself about it and say, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance." Joy is the normal condition of a Christian. When he is what he should be, his heart rejoices in the Lord. Does not the Apostolic command run thus, "Rejoice in the Lord always"? If you ever get outside that word, "always," then you may leave off rejoicing—but that you cannot do! Therefore obey Paul's injunction, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." Heap the joys, one on top of the other—joy and rejoice—and then rejoice yet again!—

"Why should the children of a King
Go mourning all their days?"

Why should not the children of the King of Kings go rejoicing all their days and express their joy so that others shall know of it, too?

Ah, dear Friends, if we were to go into some people's houses where God is not known, we would hear a very different sound from the voice of rejoicing and salvation! There is the drunk's horrible voice that grates upon the ear of her whom he promised to love and cherish, but whose life he makes unutterably miserable, while even the little children run upstairs to get out of the drinking father's way! It is an awful thing when a house is like that and there is many a house of that kind. And in other

places, where there is no drunkenness, there is many a man without the fear of God who comes in and blusters and bullies as if everybody had to be his slave. There is a woman, perhaps, who is a careless and dirty, making the home wretched through her gossip and idleness—and driving all idea of happiness far away. These things ought not to be and they must not be. God grant that your house may not be like that, but may whoever comes into your house be compelled to know that God is there—and to know it mainly by the fact that you are a happy, joyful, cheerful, thankful Christian, speaking well of God's name and not ashamed in any company to avow that you are a soldier of the Cross, a follower of the Lamb! God give you more and more of this spirit in all your households! The whole Church shall be blessed when every family is thus made happy in the Lord and in His great salvation.

III. I close by briefly noticing that this joy of holy households IS A JOY CONCERNING WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE.

You see, dear Friends, that I have a text which is too large to be handled in one sermon, so we must have the remainder another day. But I must ask you to notice the song the holy households sing. It is this—"The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." It is a threefold strain—we and our children have learned to bless the Triune God. "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end! Amen."

How we should joy in God, in our families, when we *think of all that He has done* in conquering sin and Satan, death and Hell! Christ has led captivity captive. Therefore let us sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. In that great victory of His upon the Cross, truly the right hand of the Lord was exalted, the right hand of Jehovah-Jesus did valiantly on our behalf—and for that we ought to forever be glad and to praise His name!

Then let us think of *what the Lord has done for each one of us individually.* We were captives under the dominion of sin and Satan, but He brought us out with a strong hand and with a stretched-out arm, even as He delivered Israel from the Egyptians. Then our sins pursued us and we were ready to despair—but the Lord again worked our deliverance and plucked us from the hands of our mighty foes and set us gloriously at liberty! Truly, "the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

Since then, the Lord has *helped us in Providence and delivered us from fierce temptations* and made us to stand steadfastly when the adversary has thrust at us that we might fall. "The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." As I look back upon my own life, I never know where to begin in praising God and, when I begin, I am sure I do not know where to leave off. "O my Soul, you have trodden down strength!" In your case, also, dear Friend, the right hand of the Lord has been exalted in giving you strength in the midst of weakness and helping you in spite of your many falls and failures. Can not you, each one, in your separate sphere see something that the right hand of the Lord is doing for you? Do you not, therefore, think that your families ought to ring with joyous songs of thanksgiving?

When the work of the Lord is prospering, when you go home from a Church meeting after many have confessed their faith in Christ. When you see the pool of Baptism stirred by many who have come to be symbolically buried with Christ. When you see the Church breaking out on the right hand and on the left, new mission stations and Sunday schools being opened, and more workers busy for the Master, should not your hearts dance for joy as you sing, "The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly"?

And *when you see great sinners converted,* when the drunk leaves his cups, when the swearer washes out his filthy mouth and sings the praises of God. When a hardened, irreligious, skeptical man bows like a child at Jesus' feet, should not our families, as well as ourselves, be made acquainted with it, and should it not be a subject for joy at the family altar? I am sure that it should be! And when you hear the missionaries reporting their success. When the heathen turn to the Lord and the nations begin to receive the Light of Christ, should we not, then, have a high day of jubilee and say, "This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"? I want our families to participate more and more in the joy of the great family of God till our little families melt into the one great family in Heaven and earth, till our separate tribes become part of the one great Israel of God, till we and all our kith and kin are one body in Christ and praise that Lord who is our glorious Head!

Ah, dear Friends, but we must each one begin by exercising personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Some who are here do not yet know the Lord. You cannot make other people happy while you are, yourself, without the true secret of happiness! Yet you wish to be a fountain of blessedness to others, do you not? You do not desire to do them harm, do you? Yet you good moral people who do not yield your hearts to God do a great deal of mischief if your conduct leads other people to say, "It is quite enough to be moral and upright—there is no need for us to go to Christ, to confess our sins and to receive from Him a new heart and a right spirit." You make them talk thus by setting them such an evil example!

As for you who go in and out of the House of Prayer by the year together and scarcely ask a blessing upon your meals, much less call your children to your knee to tell them about Christ, remember that you will have to meet those children at the Day of Judgment. What will they say to you parents if you neglect their souls? You work very hard, perhaps, to earn their daily bread and to put clothes on their backs, and you love them very much, but that is a poor love which loves only the body and does not love the real child, the soul that is within! If, in the middle of the night, someone woke you up and said, "Your Johnny is not at home," there would be a stir in the house pretty quickly! There would be no sleep for you if little Johnny was out in the cold. I wish that I could wake up some of you parents who are saved, but who have children who are not converted. Pray that they may be saved before they leave your roof!

The other day I saw a woman who came to join the Church and her great sorrow was that her children were all ungodly and she could not

speak to them, now, as once she might have done when they were in her own house. She never sought their salvation, then, and that time was over, for they were men and women grown up and they paid but little respect to a mother's word. I always like to hear what two children told me only a fortnight ago. One said, "I found peace at my mother's knee," and the next one said, "I found peace with God at my mother's knee." A mother's knee is a charming place for a child to find the Savior—let your knees be thus consecrated till your children shall there draw near unto God! Will you not take them individually and pray with them, and speak to them about their souls? If you do, I think that I can venture to promise you that you shall succeed in almost every case!

Whenever I hear of the children of good people turning out badly, if ever I have had an opportunity of searching into the cause, there has generally been a good reason for it. I heard of a minister's sons who were all bad fellows, but when I began to look into the life of the family, I wondered how that minister dared enter the pulpit at all, for his own character was not such as would be likely to lead his children to the Savior! It may not be so in every case, but I believe that where there is family prayer and a happy home, and a holy example, and much earnest supplication with and for the children, Solomon's declaration is still true, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

O dear Friends, may my text come true to all of you! The Lord grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—145 (PART I), 112, 215.

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

[This sermon was the second in a series of four delivered by Brother Spurgeon in connection with his 50th birthday in 1884. The first was #2538; the third was sermon #*2237—Volume 38* and the fourth was sermon #2540. All four of these sermons can be read/download from http://www.spurgeongems.org free of charge.]

DECLARING THE WORKS OF THE LORD
NO. 2540

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 24, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
In connection with the dedication of the Jubilee House, which commemorated the completion of the beloved Pastor's 50th year, June 19, 1884.

"I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." Psalm 118:17.

I could not deal with all the text on the last occasion, so I return to it. May the Holy Spirit bedew the Word afresh, and make it a joy to meditate thereon!

I. MANY ARE THE WORKS OF THE LORD. Are not all things His workmanship, from the heights of Heaven down to the deep places of the earth? From the remotest star blazing in magnificence of light, down to the gnat which dances in the beams of the evening's sun, the Lord's hand is seen everywhere! The Lord has made all things—Creation is the work of His fingers. He continues to work all things according to the good pleasure of His will. Some of these works are plain and manifest to all. If men have eyes to see, they have only to open them and they may behold God working all around them—above, beneath and everywhere! Others of His works are secret and not discerned by the organs of the body. These things are only to be fully perceived by *faith* as to their inner meaning, even when in their historical outcome they are seen of men. The great work of accomplished Redemption was seen by those who lived in our Lord's day, in the offering of the great Sacrifice—yet they saw it not in truth. It is clearly seen by the eye of faith though centuries have rolled away, but the eye of *sense* saw it not, even when openly transacted. That other gracious work of God which is carried on within the soul is only to be known to the man who, himself, experiences it, though its results are manifest enough to others. So that there are works of God which will never be known to the mass of mankind except as His children testify concerning them. It should be with us a great objective of our existence to bear witness to these mysterious deeds of Grace! We ought to say, in the language of our Master, "To this end were we born, and for this cause came we into the world, that we should bear witness unto the Truth of God." We are to live to declare these works of the Lord!

Let me very briefly recount certain of those works of God which we can declare. I think that this term may apply in a certain sense to all God's works. For instance, I have said that Creation is open to every man's observation and that he, if he will, may see that God is there. Yet very many

men do not perceive God to be the Author of Nature. They do not will to perceive Him and it is for you and for me, therefore, whenever we talk about the wisdom which is to be seen in Creation, most distinctly to refer the things which exist to the hand of the Lord. A scientific man does great service when he sanctifies his science by pointing out the traces of the Divine handiwork. While others see only the Creation, he goes further and sees the Creator. You and I may not rank with the scientific, but that need not hinder us from bearing our testimony to the Lord's working, for the naked eye suffices to cause wonder and adoration. When we gaze upon majestic scenery of mountain and sea, while others are entirely taken up with the beauty of the prospect, it is for us to say with Milton—

"These are Your glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty! Yours this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair; Yourself how wondrous then!
Unspeakable, who sits above these heavens
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these Your lowest works; yet these declare
Your goodness beyond thought and power Divine."

Thus we can preach the sermon of which the beautiful in Nature is the text! If men will not go "from Nature up to Nature's God"—as they never will till they first come down from God to nature—we, at least, can point the way. We can say to them, "We cannot suffer you to look on all these majestic works without telling you Who it is that in wisdom has made them all." Thus we shall, like the Psalmist, "declare the works of the Lord."

Think, next, of the work of God in *Providence*. If men would but observe it, the hand of God is clearly to be seen in human history, both in the great records of nations and in the little stories of private lives. He who will watch for Providences need not be long without spying them out. We can see evidences of design as clearly in the deeds of human life as we can in the works of Nature, but, often, men will not see them. Consequently, if you do *see* them, my Brother, *declare* them! Make the ungodly man see the hand of God, or, if you cannot make him see it, at least let him know that *you* see it and that surely the hand of God is in all the workings of Providence. Have you not some personal story to tell of how the Lord has interposed for your help? I will not insult you with the question, for, if you have led a Christian life for years, you must have many, many such records concerning the loving kindness of the Lord laid up in store in your memory! Bring these out, let them not lie, as on a moldy shelf, but bring them out and tell to others what God has done for you in the ordering of the ordinary or extraordinary events of your life. "Declare the works of the Lord."

Especially must you and I dwell emphatically and often upon the work of God in *Redemption.* Are we not too slow to talk about this marvel of all marvels—this greatest wonder of time and of eternity—that God came here in our flesh to suffer, bleed and die, that He might work out our redemption? All this is plainly written in the Word of God, but many men

do not read the Bible. Then, let them see it and hear it! Be walking Bibles. Often tell "the old, old story of Jesus and His love." Do not wait till you can gather a great congregation—talk of it to your children, to your friends, to any with whom you are brought into contact by the Providence of God! "Declare the works of the Lord" which cluster around the Cross. Never angel had better news to bring than you have! Then play the angel whenever you can. Be the messenger of God in telling what He has done through the Redemption worked out by His only-begotten Son in His wondrous Sacrifice on Calvary.

And then, dear Friends, a further work of God which springs out of our redemption is that of *regeneration*—and we must also declare that. If men care little for the story of Creation, Providence, or Redemption, they care still less for the great mystery of Regeneration. They do not believe in it. Some of them, alas, hold it up to ridicule. Do not be ashamed to declare that work of the Lord and do it mainly by exhibiting the fruit of it in your life, but also by clearly narrating your own experience whenever you have a fitting opportunity. Oh, it is a wonderful thing to have been born twice, to have been "begotten, again, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." It is a thing to be spoken of humbly, but yet most boldly, that we have passed from death unto life, that we have been brought out of the kingdom of Satan into the Kingdom of God's dear Son! I think that man who was born blind, to whom our Lord Jesus afterwards gave sight, if he had lived for many years and had mixed much in society, would have been sure, somehow, to turn the conversation round so that he might tell how he was once blind, but was afterwards made to see. I should not wonder if, sometimes, his friends and acquaintances were caused to smile because of the oft-told tale. They would say, one to another, "Before the evening is over, we shall hear once more the story of the Prophet who anointed his eyes with the clay and then bade him go and wash, and so caused him to find his sight! It does not matter what the subject under discussion may be, he will turn it around, somehow, and drag in his narrative of the miracle which always ends with, 'Whereas I was blind, now I see.'"

"Ah," he would say, "you were speaking about light. Do you know there was a time when I did not know what light was? I had never seen a ray of it, but there came a wondrous miracle worker, called Jesus, who opened my eyes." "You spoke about water, Sir, did you not? I remember the pool of Siloam, it was wonderful water to me, when I went, and washed and received my sight." "No," you say, "I was *not* talking about water, I was speaking about the earth." And the man who had been blind says, "Oh, but I remember when I had clay put on my eyes, and yet that day, when I went and washed it off, was made the means of restoring me to sight!" I am sure that he would get that familiar story in somehow! Well, take care that you do the same, dear Brothers and Sisters. "Declare the works of the Lord," and tell what He did for you when you were regenerated by the Holy Spirit!

Since then, what a scene of wonders has opened up before our astonished gaze! I do not know which day of my life was most full of mercy since my spiritual birthday, but it does seem to me that the farther I go in the heavenly pilgrimage, the clearer is the light, the more charming the view, the sharper the lines of beauty, the more distinct the coloring and the brighter the approaching Glory. Yes, when God begins to work in us, there is no telling what is to come—it is always "better than before." The light shines more and more unto the perfect day. Therefore, tell more as you learn more, and publish more as you experience more, and go on forever telling what never can be fully told. If you only told the blessings of the past, there would be a lifelong story for you to tell, but as each day seems to exceed its fellow, as the days of Grace so swiftly follow one another, let your testimony continually become more courageous, more clear, more frequent as you tell others what God has done for you. "Declare the works of the Lord."

If I were to dwell at length upon these great subjects and then go on to mention everything that the Lord is doing for His Church and for the maintenance and spread of His eternal Truth, I would take up all the time with what I want to be only the preliminary to my discourse, so let us advance to my second point.

II. THESE WORKS OF THE LORD OUGHT TO BE DECLARED. There are always so many good and valid reasons for every one of God's commands that, though it ought to be obeyed even if no reason is given, yet it should be obeyed the more quickly when there are so many reasons clearly apparent to us. Why, then, should we declare the works of the Lord?

I answer, first, *for God's Glory.* This is man's chief end, "to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." O saint, how can you glorify God better than by declaring His works? Will you begin, now, to adore the Lord? Suppose I were to lead you in an act of adoration, what would I say? How should I praise God, except by saying what God is, or what God does? We never bring anything to God from outside, but when we want to praise Him most, we fetch the jewels for His crown out of His own regalia. What would we say if we began to praise Him? "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble and He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" You see, it is all through the story of what He is and what He has done. This is the only way in which we can truly magnify the Lord, making Him great by mentioning the greatness which He already has! Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, since I am sure you would wish to pay your

revenue of praise to the great King of Kings, be sure that you "declare the works of the Lord."

Do this, also, *for the comfort of His people.* What is there that can comfort God's saints like telling them what the Lord has done—His love in times past, His love to others of His people, His love to you? You will comfort many despondent ones if you tell them how you were brought low and the Lord helped you. One of the readiest and surest ways of lighting a candle for a child of God in the dark is to relate your own experience of the goodness of the Lord. Therefore, then, as you want to comfort God's people, be sure that you tell them what God has done for you.

Moreover, I know that you want *to guide the anxious* and how shall they be guided so well as by telling them what the Lord does? If you begin to tell them what *they* ought to do, you will only entangle them still more in the net, for what can these poor souls do to release themselves? Tell them what the Lord does for sinners—how He delivers them from the fowler's snare. Tell them what a mighty arm He has to pluck them out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay—and especially dwell upon the fact that He has brought *you* up out of that horrible pit and set your feet upon a Rock and established your goings. I feel sure that this personal testimony of yours will be one of the best means of leading poor troubled anxious ones to put their trust in God.

Moreover, dear Brothers and Sisters, tell what the Lord has done because it will be such *a warning to the self-righteous.* They think to go to Heaven as they are! They suppose themselves to be quite fit for the spiritual kingdom. Tell them that you have been born again. Declare to them what the Spirit of God worked in you when He made all things new and they will say to themselves, "We do not know anything about this matter, we never felt this change." And, believe me, the narration of the Holy Spirit's work in you and upon you will be more powerful to many of them than any words that I can put together! Your personal declaration of how the Lord takes away the heart of stone and gives the heart of flesh will induce many a man to say, "I am ignorant of all this, therefore what is to become of me?" And this anxiety will lead him to fly to Christ that he, also, may experience the new birth and himself be saved. Do not hesitate, then, to declare everywhere God's working in you and for you, that others may be led to rejoice in the same blessings of His Grace.

Besides, *it gladdens the Church of God* when any are heard declaring the works of the Lord. Have you not, dear Friends, often been comforted when a Brother, home from a foreign land, where he has been a missionary, has told you how God has blessed him to some heathen tribe so that it has turned to Christ? Why, as you heard his story, you felt that you, also, would like to be missionaries! And when God blessed you, my dear Sister, in your Sunday school class, tell others about the sweet joy you have had in seeing His Spirit working with your girls or boys! For then they, also, will want to enter upon some holy service for the Master. When a Church gets dull and cold—and it is very apt to do so at times—

and a kind of ignoble despondency steals over the servants of God, come and tell what the Lord did in the ages past! Tell of the glorious things which He did in our fathers' days and in the old time before them! And then bring in a little of what you have, yourself, seen, how God has used you, a poor, weak, worthless instrument, to glorify Himself, for so you will put new life into these desponding ones and they will begin, again, to be of good courage.

"Well," says one, "I have not said much about what God has done for me. It is not because I do not know Him, but I have not thought it necessary to tell it." I think that no mercy of God ought to be stowed away in the cellar—everything that He does ought to be proclaimed! Last Tuesday I saw some 24 persons, whose names I was happy to give in to be proposed for Church membership, and I felt very happy and thankful, yet I said to myself as I went home, "I am not half as glad about these numerous conversions as I ought to be." Time was when if anybody had said to me when I began to preach, "You will sometimes see 40 converts in a day. Sometimes you shall go week after week and see a score coming forward each week," why, I should have said, "No, that is too much! I would die of joy if I ever saw that! Yet, by God's Grace, I *have* seen it again and again! Do you not think that God blesses us more than we praise Him and that, sometimes, if our success becomes a little less than usual, He might say to us," Well, I did use you, you know, yet you did not seem at all grateful for it. I did give you one soul and that soul was worth a thousand worlds, but you did not seem to think anything of it. I want you to appreciate the blessings I have given before I bestow any more upon you." Why, Sirs, a man might give his eyes to win a single soul, and be perfectly satisfied to go into Heaven blind, with that one soul at his right hand! Better by far to enter into life blind, halt, maimed, with some companions won for Christ, than to live here with all one's eyes and faculties, and be a barren soul and never bring a sinner to the Savior's feet.

Do let us, then, bless the Lord, praise Him and declare His wondrous works. If you do, somebody will say that you are an egotist. Whenever anybody says that of me, I feel that it is so true that I do not get angry about it, because if I am not egotistical when I tell what the Lord has done for me, and by me, I daresay that I am about some other matter and, therefore, if I do not deserve the cut of the whip for *that*, I do for something else! So I take it as a rebuke that I deserve some way or other. But I am not speaking with egotism any the more for that. When the Lord does a good thing in me, or for me, or by me, I will tell of it and I encourage you to do the same. If somebody says, "He talks about himself," answer, "Well, Paul was constantly doing the same thing." One of the humblest men who ever lived yet he was continually talking about himself. You see, he knew more about himself than he did of anybody else—and he knew more about what God had done for him than of what God had done for Apollos or Cephas. And he was quite right in giving that kind of evidence which, in his own case, would be most powerful with those who

had seen him and known him—and who understood in very deed and of a truth that God had worked great wonders in him and by him!

So, then, we may continue to say that there are good reasons for declaring the works of God.

III. Now, thirdly, WHO OUGHT TO DECLARE THESE WORKS OF THE LORD?

Well, first, let those declare them who know them. It is a wretched business to go up into a pulpit to declare God's works and to pray God the Holy Spirit to help you—and then to put your hand into your pocket and pull out somebody else's manuscript, which you have bought, to read it to the people! That borrowing or stealing of another man's testimony is not what the Psalmist means and I do not see how God can be expected to bless it. But when a man speaks out of the fullness of his own heart of what he has, himself, tasted, handled and felt, *then* is there power in the testimony! You know how pleased those quacks who sell medicine are when they can get a testimonial from somebody who says that he has been cured by their remedies. Whether or not the most of those testimonials that are published are manufactured at home, I cannot tell, but if they do get a genuine recommendation from some living person, testifying to the beneficial effect of their medicine, how they try to make it known everywhere! Well, surely, there is common sense in that, for men are convinced by the testimony of others.

It is for this reason that we *who have experienced the working of God's Grace* should bear our own personal testimony concerning what He has done for our soul. There is no man who can speak with power about the Grace of God unless he has felt its influence in his own heart—and personal witness-bearing is always effective. "I preached," said John Bunyan, "very often, like a man in chains to men in chains." He heard his own fetters rattle while he talked to others about the bondage of sin—and I am sure that he must have spoken in a most convincing way—but when he regained his liberty, then he spoke of that emancipation like one who had not a fetter left upon him—and his hearers began to believe in such freedom as he described and to ask how they could obtain the same! If you have really tasted that the Lord is gracious and you declare to others what you have experienced of His graciousness, some, at least, among your hearers will believe you. There will be the accent of conviction about your message and even if they do not believe you, then so much the greater will be their sin in remaining in unbelief after they have had the honest and hearty witness of a true man whose word they dare not question!

Think, dear Friends, if God does not get witnesses among those who have had their sins forgiven, from where are His witnesses to come? If you and I, who have had His love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, do not praise Him, who will do so? Are you going to leave this work to worldlings? Then it never will be done! Are you going to hand over the testimony of the preciousness of Jesus to any chance body who may come along? Oh, let it not be so, but say within yourself, "Surely,

the very stones would rise and speak if I remained silent! And the timber out of the wall might cry against me if I did not tell what the Lord has done for my soul."

I have thus tried to set before you the works of the Lord which are to be declared, the reasons why we should declare them and the persons who should be engaged in this blessed business of declaring the works of the Lord.

IV. Now, in the fourth place, I want, with all my heart, to stir up your hearts and my own, also, to THE DUTY OF DECLARING GOD'S WORKS.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, as many of you as know the Lord, I pray you to declare His works and to be encouraged to do so because, first, *it is a very simple duty*. I wish that some preachers whom I know would think that it is so. When I have heard most elaborate discourses, or have known Brothers labor at their sermons day after day, I have wondered what their idea of true preaching could be! A minister said to me, some time ago, "I am disappointed with my people, for when I study very hard and prepare a sermon that takes me a whole fortnight to complete, they never seem to appreciate it. But the other day," he said, "I had been so busy that I just went into the pulpit and talked upon a very simple theme concerning Jesus and His love—just such a sermon as I would deliver if I were suddenly called up from my bed and bid to preach in my shirt sleeves—and my people greatly enjoyed that simple kind of talk!" "Well then," I replied, "if I were in your place, I would give them another discourse of the same sort! I should preach some more of those shirt-sleeve sermons, if they feed on them, and enjoy them."

The fact is, Brothers, it is possible to hammer a sermon so long as to get all the goodness out of it, just as men will beat a beefsteak till they have driven all the juice out of it and so give you nothing but a tough piece of leather! It is very possible to elaborate a sermon until you have worked all that is good out of it. Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ meant that His ministers should go into the world and preach such masterly sermons that they should almost suffer from softening of the brain and I do not know what besides, because of the strain and struggle to get at what, according to my Bible, is very plain and simple? Is there not in all this a good deal of desire to shine and to seem to be somebody of importance? I believe it is so, but it ought not to be. The very philosophy of preaching is, to "declare the works of the Lord." I do believe that, often, our simplest language is the best we can use. I have some very rare flowers in my conservatory, but I must confess that I like a primrose or even a daisy as well as any of them. When you are teaching, my dear Friends, pluck your illustrations from the fields and the hedge rows, and they will be far better than those which are brought from distant lands and die on the road.

Is it not a very simple thing to tell what the Lord has done? Next time you try to preach a sermon, my young Friend, do just that—tell what the Lord Jesus Christ did and never mind how you do it! Tell as well as ever you can what Jesus Christ did, but do not think so much of how you *tell*

it as of what you are to tell. Another time, make known what the Holy Spirit has done in you. "Why, I could tell that!" says one. Of course you could! And that is the very best kind of discourse. "Oh, but," says another, "we must take time for study!" Certainly, study God's Word with all your might, but there are parts of it which are so simple that they do not require any study—those parts which you, yourself, have tasted and handled and felt! The simpler and plainer your personal testimony concerning them is, the more likely will you be to do good by it. Come, then, Brothers, do not go sailing all over the seas to pick up some rarities to display in a great congregation, but when you get two or three people together, just tell them what you have experienced of the Grace of God in your own soul. You know that this is what I cannot tell. "What?" you ask, "is there something *we* know that *you* do not?" Yes, of course there is. I can tell what has been done in my own soul, but I cannot tell what has been done in yours. You have a portion of testimony for Christ which nobody but yourselves can give. This work of glorifying the Grace of God is a mosaic—I can put in my little pieces of stone or marble to form the pattern so far—but there is another part of that mosaic which nobody but yourselves can manufacture. It can be made out of the odds and ends of your spiritual experience, as you think them to be but insignificant and unimportant as they seem to be, they help to complete the whole design. Therefore, do not keep back that portion, I pray you, for you can now see what a simple duty it is for every child of God to declare the works of the Lord.

Then notice what *a very manifest duty* it is that you should tell what God has done for you. Does this need any proof? Do you think that the Lord saved you that you might just be happy, keeping your joy within your own heart, ever feeding and fattening it? I do not think the Lord had such a narrow purpose as that in His mind when He saved you. Depend upon it, if God has given you a jewel to wear, it is that other eyes may be gladdened by the sight of it. He never lit the candle of His love for you to go and hide yourself in your room, shutting the door, and saying to yourself, "What a charming candle I have! What a beautiful light it gives! How I enjoy its brightness!" No, when the Lord gave you that candle, He intended it to give light to all in the house and He also meant that other candles might be lighted by it. "I had such a sweet experience the other day," one says. Did you? Then, do you not think it was given to you because another person needed it as much as you did and that, therefore, you are to go and tell others of it? There are some hearers who, if we preach the Doctrines of Grace, sit and suck them in—but if we try to bring sinners to Christ, they say, "We did not get fed tonight." And pray, who are you? Do you think that God sent His servant to do nothing but to feed you with a spoon? There are other things for the minister to do besides looking after you. I think, sometimes, it is our duty to leave the 99 and to go after the one that has gone astray—not so much to feed the people of God, as to search for such as are out of the way.

And I notice that the people of God are generally best fed when that is the case and they feel the most joy when the preacher is seeking the salvation of sinners! If you, my Friends, are not happy when that is being done, there is something wrong with you—you had better ask the Great Physician to give you a dose of heavenly medicine to cure you of that sad disease! You are spiritually out of order, for he who is in a right condition towards Christ loves the souls of men and delights in that teaching which God is likely to bless to their conversion. It is, therefore, a manifest duty for us to tell to others what the Lord has done for us, that they, also, may come and drink of the river of the Water of Life and never thirst again.

Notice, also, that this is *a very profitable duty.* I hardly know of anything that is more useful to a Christian than to tell others what the Lord has done for him. There is a lad in a school and he is getting on very well and he can only have another year's schooling. I have known this proposal made to his parents—let him become a kind of pupil-teacher—let him continue to learn and let him also begin to teach others. I was once in that condition, myself, and I can bear my testimony that I never learned so much, or learned so thoroughly, as when I had to teach others!

When I first began to preach, this was my usual way of working. I was up in the morning early, praying and reading the Word. Then all day I was either teaching or studying hard, but at five o'clock every evening, except Saturday, I started out to preach what I had learned during the day! I used to tell the people, simply and earnestly, what I had first received into my own mind and heart—and I found that I derived greater benefit by proclaiming to others what I had learned than if I had kept it all to myself. I do not believe that you can thoroughly know the Doctrines of Grace till you begin to teach them to other people. You will soon find that they will not receive them, and so you will learn the doctrine of man's natural depravity. You will speedily discover that your eloquence will not draw them to Christ and, in that way you will learn the Doctrine of Effectual Calling—that the Holy Spirit must, Himself, come and work upon them if they are to be saved! You will prove that some will reject Christ though you thought they were most likely to accept Him, and that others who you felt sure would refuse Him, will be the first to receive Him! There you have the great doctrine of Divine Sovereignty. You see, from your own observation, how the Lord has compassion upon whom He will have compassion and how He has mercy upon whom He will have mercy. You will never know the Truth of God in all its fullness till with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, you have attempted to inculcate it in the hearts of others. So it is a profitable duty to "declare the works of the Lord."

Moreover, it *is a very pleasant duty to* those who practice it. I can testify that it is one of the most delightful exercises in the world, to proclaim the loving kindness of the Lord. Old soldiers at Chelsea barracks, or old sailors at Greenwich, who could recollect Waterloo and Trafalgar, never

tired of telling the familiar story. If you could have crept up behind them, when there were half-a-dozen people round, you would have found that they were talking about the battles they were in long years ago. They would be sure to linger over the details of their escapes and their heroic deeds, for it is a pleasure to old men thus to fight their battles over again! And, certainly, it must be a pleasure to Christians, who have experienced the wonderful working of God's Grace, to tell out that far sweeter story! It does seem to me that this ought to be our constant delight. There should be no need for me to have to come here and urge you to this happy task. Why, Brothers and Sisters, you ought to be like the Israelites when the Lord turned, again, the captivity of Zion—with them you should cry, "The Lord has done great things for us; whereof we are glad!" Tell it out among the heathen! Make it known unto the utmost ends of the earth that the Lord our God has given His own Son to die that we might be redeemed from wrath through Him. Be not silent, Beloved, but publish night and day the loving kindness of the Lord.

This ought also to be a constant duty with all who love the Lord. When we have once told the story, we ought to feel bound to tell it again and again and again. It is the man who has never spoken for Christ who never does speak for Him. He who has been silent is all too apt to continue silent. It is good for you young people, when you are newly-converted, to bear your testimony at the Church meeting. It often opens your mouths for Christ for the first time and I exhort you, when you begin in the workshop or the workroom as a believer in Jesus—when you begin Christian life *anywhere*—begin it not as if you were possessed of a deaf and dumb devil, but as if you first heard the voice of God and then speak out what He had said to you! I may be addressing some who are getting quite old who have not yet borne their testimony for Christ. O my dear Friends, wake up! You will have to be quick, or else your opportunity for testifying will be over. I could almost imagine that you would want to come back from Heaven to tell somebody about Jesus if you had not done it while you were here! Then do not think of going there till you have told all you can about your glorious Lord.

"But I cannot," says one. What can you not do? If you were to be cured of a dreadful disease, I am sure you would be able to tell somebody who the doctor was. And if, tonight, a thief were to break into your house and a policeman came and seized him, I am sure you would tell somebody tomorrow about what had occurred. "But," you say, "I am such a poor one at talking." I am not sorry to hear that—there are many who might be improved if they were like you in that respect. But, still, you can generally tell what happens and you can certainly tell what the Lord has done for you if you only seek the aid of the Holy Spirit. So, put away all that deadness and dullness of yours—rob God no longer of the Glory due unto His name, but tell what He has done for your soul.

Do you ask, "Whom shall I tell?" Well, good man, tell your wife if you have never yet spoken to her about these things. Christian woman, do you enquire, "Whom shall I tell?" Why, tell your husband and your chil-

dren! You cannot have a better congregation than your own family. Are you in a factory? Tell your work mates about Jesus Christ. There was a Brother, worshipping with us, who went into a certain workshop and he very soon bore his testimony in such a fashion that his master and the three other men in the place were all converted—and now they are all members of this Church—and their wives, too! When the husbands had heard the Truth of God, themselves, they wanted to go home that they might tell it to their wives, and so they have all been brought in! And, lately, there has been a new workman brought into the shop who did not love the things of God and could not stand religion, but God has blessed our Brother to him, also. Tell it out then, tell it out, you who have been lately converted! Do not hide your light under a bushel. Imitate Brother Gwillim over yonder, and others in this place who are always glad to have a word with the anxious, after the service is over. Speak up for your Lord whenever you have the opportunity!

I believe that it is a great help in bringing people to decision when Mr. Moody asks those to stand up who wish to be prayed for. Anything that tends to separate you from the ungodly around you is good for you. Now, if you have given yourselves to Christ, tell it out, for, after our Lord takes you Home, you cannot go back to the world! When Caesar landed on a certain shore, he burned the boats behind him so that his men might know that they must conquer or perish. I advise you to do likewise—burn your boats by a clear and explicit declaration, "The Lord has worked this great change in me, by His Grace, and I am His servant henceforth and forever."

May God bless you, dear Friends, every one, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen

HYMNS FROM "OUR HYMN BOOK"—408, 670, 673.

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

[This sermon was the fourth in a series of four delivered by Brother Spurgeon in connection with his 50th birthday in 1884. The first was #2538; the second was sermon #2539 and the third was sermon #*2237—Volume 38. All four of these sermons can be read/download from http://www.spurgeongems.org free of charge.*]

"MR. MOODY'S TEXT"
NO. 2541

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 31, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 15, 1884.

"I will trust and not be afraid."
Isaiah 12:2.

I saw this text advertised as being printed in colors and it was called, "Mr. Moody's Text." When I saw him yesterday, I asked him how it was his text any more than it is mine. He said that he was sure he did not know—he never called it his text, so far as he knew. Somebody may have thought it a very proper text for him and so it is, but I lay claim to the text, too, and I should advise every Christian to say, "That is my text also." I would be very glad if some who are not Christians should be brought, by the Grace of God, into the bonds of the Covenant and should be able to lay hold on this text, and so say, "I will trust and not be afraid." I told Mr. Moody that if it belonged to nobody else in particular, it certainly was mine. He said, "How so?" "Well," I replied, "I told my people the meaning of that text some time ago." I said to you, dear Friends, that you might get to Heaven by the Free Grace train if you did but get on board it anywhere, but that it was always advisable, if you could, to travel first-class. I pointed out the third-class carriage to you. This is it—"What time I am afraid, I will trust in the Lord." If you get in there, you will go all right to the journey's end, but it is much better to be where there are nice, soft cushions to sit upon. This is the first-class carriage—"I will trust and not be afraid." You are no safer, I suppose, in one carriage than in the other, but, certainly, you are much more comfortable in this first-class carriage! "I will trust and not be afraid."

Having told that story, I claim the text as being my own. However, it will be all the more mine by belonging to other people. I count that it is rather a narrowing of a man's possessions when he cannot permit others to enjoy them without losing the enjoyment of them, himself. But it makes your treasure all the richer and the larger when everybody else may have it and yet you, yourself, may have none the less. So is it with this delightful text! I may say it. You may say it, my Brother, and you, my Sister. And you, venerable Sir, and you, juvenile Believer—you may each one say, by the Grace of God, "I will trust and not be afraid."

The man, however, who dares to say it, and who ought to say it, is the man described in this remarkable chapter of Isaiah. "In that day *you* shall say, O Lord, I will praise You." The man who can truly say, "I will trust and not be afraid," is the man who from his heart praises God—the man who spends his breath and spends his life in magnifying the Most

High. Then the Prophet goes on, "I will praise You: though You were angry with me." So that the man who can say, "I will trust and not be afraid," is the man who has felt something of the anger of God, one who has known what it is to come under the lash of the Law, but also who has realized what it is to be delivered from its iron grip. He who has never felt the burden of sin will, I think, never know the joy of faith. What has he to trust about? What cause is there for his being afraid when he does not see any sin in himself? But he who is consciously a sinner is the man who can say, "I will trust and not be afraid," when the Lord has forgiven him his sin.

Isaiah proceeds, "Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comforted me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid." When your whole salvation is found in God, especially in God as He reveals Himself in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ—when Christ is your Savior and has saved you from your sin then, indeed, may you say, "I will trust and not be afraid."

It is in the hope that I am addressing many persons here of this character that I have taken this text, "I will trust and not be afraid." If I can, I am going to do four things with the text. First, I am going to *twist the text.* Secondly, to *untwist it.* Thirdly, to *press it.* And fourthly, to *praise it.*

I. First, then, I propose to do what you may think is a very horrible thing, and what, as a rule, I will not do. That is, I am going to TWIST THE TEXT.

Mark you, I shall not do this, myself—I only intend to tell you how a great many persons twist it. They use most of the same words, but they put them in the wrong position. For instance, one man says, "*I will not trust and yet I will not be afraid."* He does not say, "I will trust and not be afraid," but, "I will not trust and *yet* I will not be afraid. I am no Believer in Christ. I do not need any Free Grace Gospel. I need no mercy, for I am righteous, I have kept the Law. I shall not trust in Jesus and yet I shall not be afraid." Alas, there are persons who do not say that in words, but, in effect, that is exactly what they say! They have no righteousness but their own and that is only filthy rags—yet they say that they are rich, increased in goods and have need of nothing. I heard of a man who wrote over his door these words, "Let no evil person enter here." One of his neighbors remarked that if he carried out his own orders, he would never be able to go into his own house!

I am afraid that there are many people who think all others evil except themselves, yet if they could but look within, they would discover that the evil person not only lives in their house, but that his head is under their hat! They are, in fact, themselves the evil persons, though they think that they are righteous. Now, dear Friend, if you fancy that you can live in this world wrapped up in yourself without being afraid. If you suppose that you can, without fear, die clad only in your own righteousness, I pray you do not be such a fool as to suppose that you can wake up in the next world in your own righteousness and not be afraid. Oh, if you had but a clear view of how defective and how defiled your righteousness is in the sight of God, you would never dare to put any confi-

dence in it! Much better men than you, such for instance as *David,* have cried, "Enter not into judgment with Your servant: for in Your sight shall no man living be justified." The Gospel teaches us that there is no salvation by our own works. If there were, what need would there be of the work of Christ? What need of yonder awful tragedy on Calvary if we could save ourselves and could stand calm and quiet and fearless without a trust in the Lord Jesus Christ? I do pray you, do not adopt such proud and boastful language as to say, "I will not trust and yet I will not be afraid."

Are you an utter worldling? Do you say, "Give me plenty to eat and drink, and I do not care about that faith of which you make so much. I want ready cash! I want to have my portion now"? If that is the way you talk, now, there may come a time when you will be quiet and alone, when fear will steal over you. There may come a time of trouble when the comforts of this world will vanish from you. There may come a season of sickness when all your money bags, if they were laid upon your suffering body, could not heal it, and when all your broad possessions will only make it the harder to die, and leave them all! Do not try to twist my text in that way, I do implore you, for it must be a losing game for you if you say, "I will not trust and yet I win not be afraid."

Then I have seen the text twisted another way, thus, "*I will be afraid and not trust.*" There are many people who are doing this. If they are not saying it in words, they are practically doing it. They are naturally timorous, they are afraid of many of the ordinary events that happen in the Providence of God and they also have sufficient conscience to know that they have done wrong in the sight of God—and that sin must be punished. So they are afraid and they keep on being afraid, for they will not trust in Christ Jesus to save them. This is a very painful condition for anyone to be in—and if it should get still more painful, I should not wonder—and neither should I particularly pity the person who is in such a state. If he chooses to be afraid and refuses to trust, whatever mischief follows upon such mistrust he richly deserves. O Friend, if you are afraid, I do pray you to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ! If you do not, I fear that one of these days you will get to trust in your being afraid!

You ask, "How can I do that?" I have seen scores of persons who, because they have felt the weight of sin, have begun to trust in their convictions. They have said, "We are not like some whom we know. We cannot sin without fearing the price of conscience. We are seeking the Savior, we are desirous of finding Christ." Yet there they stick. I heard one say that such a state of mind as that is often the doorstep to Grace. So I believe it is, but if any of you go to your homes and sit on the doorstep all night, I think it is highly probable that the policeman will want to know what you are doing there. I should suspect that you had taken something that had not done you any good if you sat there all night! I would not recommend you to attempt it, even literally. But, *spiritually*, it is a horrible thing to get to the doorstep of Grace and sit there—to get to the doorstep of Heaven and sit there, for outside of Heaven is Hell—even if it is the very doorstep of Heaven!

If you are not in Christ, you are out of Christ! He that is not alive is dead. He that is not washed is foul. He that is not regenerate is unregenerate. There cannot be any space between these two—there is no neutral border ground. I pray you, therefore, do not trust in your being afraid! Do not settle down contentedly in that condition. I have known people go in and out of the House of God for years and never accept Christ. And they have grown to be confirmed doubters, confirmed distrusters, confirmed despairers. Oh, I pray you, do not get into that state! It is a horrible condition of heart! Instead of saying, "I will be afraid and will not trust," may God the Holy Spirit sweetly incline you to say, "I will trust and not be afraid."

There is a third class of people who twist my text in this way, "*I will trust and be afraid."* Again I confess that they do not say it, but they *do* it, and actions speak louder than words. They trust yet they are afraid. It looks as if that could not be, yet I have known some, about whom I have been compelled to think, in the judgment of charity, that they do trust and, therefore, that they are saved, yet, for all that, they are very much afraid. Oh, these dear good inconsistent people! They seem as if they were resolved to shut themselves out of the Kingdom of God even while the door of Mercy stands wide open! The sun is shining brightly, so they pull down all the blinds, and they cannot be satisfied until they have excluded every ray of light. This is not right, for, my dear doubting Friend, it brings no glory to God! It is no recommendation of true religion and it is a stumbling block in the way of a good many other people. If I am addressing any such persons, young or old, I pray the Lord to enable them to give up this bad habit of trusting and yet being afraid.

Be of good courage, you very, very timid ones, and alter your tone. Try to put a, "Selah," into your life, as David often did in his Psalms. Frequently he put in a, "Selah," and then he changed the key, directly. In like manner, change the key of your singing—you are a great deal too low. Let the harp strings be tightened up a bit and let us have no more of these flat, mournful notes! Give us some other key, please, and begin to say with the Prophet Isaiah, "O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comforted me. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid."

II. Now, in the second place, I am going to *untwist the text.* That is to say, I will try to spread it out a little, to show you what there is in it, applying it to different instances in which it will be right and proper for you to say, "I will trust and not be afraid."

And first, dear Friend, say this about *trusting in Christ.* "I will trust and not be afraid." Some dear souls are afraid to trust Jesus. If they better understood the matter, they would be afraid *not* to trust Him. He commands us to trust Him and He has declared very plainly what are the consequences of disobedience to this command—"He that believes not shall be damned"—so that faith must be a *duty*, and unbelief a terrible offense in the sight of God. Where it becomes a thoroughly confirmed unbelief which masters the mind and heart, it is a truly awful state for anyone to be in. Beloved, never be afraid of trusting Christ! Lean hard on

Him—lean your whole weight on Him. Come lay at His feet your burdens, your sins, your cares, your troubles—nothing delights our Lord more than being trusted—and the more we trust Him the more we please Him. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him," but when you have faith, then you may lay what you will on the great Burden-Bearer, "casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you," saying, as you do so, "I will trust and never be afraid of trusting Jesus; but I will be afraid of distrusting Him."

O dear Friends, never be afraid of Jesus! Do you fear Immanuel, or dread the Lamb of God? The Lamb is a beautiful emblem of Christ—what little child is afraid of a lamb? He might be afraid of a young lion, but even an infant will put its hand on a lamb and play with it without the slightest fear. Never be afraid of coming to Christ! As I have often told you, you need a Mediator between yourselves and God, but you need no Mediator between yourselves and the Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus! That were to make the Mediator of no use to you. Come to Him just as you are and say, "I will not be afraid of the Lord Jesus Christ. I will trust Him and not be afraid."

Go on to say, "I will trust and not be afraid *concerning all my past sinfulness.* It is enough to make me afraid, but I have read in the Scriptures that, 'the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.' And that, 'all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.' So then, I, red-handed, black as Hell's most profound night, am not afraid to come and wash in the Fountain filled with blood, crying to the Lord as I do it, 'Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow—yes, whiter than snow.'" O Beloved, trust in Jesus and be not afraid, whatever your iniquity and transgression may have been in the past, for He shall blot out as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins!

As for *present sinfulness,* your heart is very sinful, "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," but you may say, even concerning that, "I will trust and not be afraid," for the Lord has said, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." He can make you pure and holy! He can give you a heart of flesh, tender and sensitive to the movements of His Divine Spirit. You shall have a new nature, having within it a living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever!

Now I want you to go a stage further, if you can, and say, "I will trust and not be afraid *about anything concerning which I dare trust.*" There are some things about which you *cannot* trust God. If you go into evil company, you may not say, "I will trust God that I shall not be injured." If you begin to frequent places of questionable amusement, you may not say, "I trust God that I may go in and out of this place and yet not take any disease." That is presumption, not faith! But whenever you trust God about your cares, your troubles, or whatever it may be, say to yourself concerning this, also, "I will trust and not be afraid." Is it not a blessed thing that all the needs of God's people can be readily supplied by their God? It has been calculated that to feed the children of Israel in the wilderness, it must have required a hundred thousand bushels of manna every day. Now, you young people, set to work and calculate how much

that makes in 40 years! From where did it all come? Well, as far as the eye could see, it came from nowhere—yet it fell everywhere! If you were in need of a hundred thousand bushels of wheat tomorrow—I mean, if you, as a Child of God, really needed it, God could get that where he got the hundred thousand bushels of manna every morning—that is, out of His own All-Sufficiency. He can certainly supply all your needs—therefore say, "I will trust and not be afraid about anything and about everything that is a lawful subject of trust. Whatever God calls me to be, to do, or to suffer, I will trust in Him and not be afraid."

I desire always to do this as God's minister. I have not always done it, I am sorry to say, yet I wish to do it. Did you ever notice this one thing about Christian ministers, that they need even more mercy than other people? Possibly someone asks, "How do you know that?" Well, I feel quite safe when I am following the Apostle Paul. And if you look through his Epistles to the Romans, to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians and to Philemon, you will see what blessings he wishes to the people at the beginning of each letter. Or if it is not quite at the beginning, it is a few verses down—"Grace unto you, and peace." You remember that Paul also wrote three Epistles to *ministers*—there are two to Timothy and one to Titus. What does he say to them? He says, "Grace, *mercy*, and peace, from God our Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord," as if he thought that, although everybody needs mercy, ministers need it more than anybody else!

And so we do, for if we are not faithful, we shall be greater sinners, even, than our hearers, and it needs much Grace for us always to be faithful—and much mercy will be required to cover our shortcomings. So I shall take those three things to myself—"Grace, mercy, and peace." You may have the two, "Grace and peace," but I need mercy more than any of you. So I take it from my Lord's loving hands and I will trust and not be afraid, despite all my shortcomings, and feebleness, and blunders, and mistakes in the course of my whole ministry. I will still cast all my burden upon my blessed Lord and will still go on trusting and not being afraid. But, dear Friends, you may do the same—let us all do it! God help us to do it, from this time forth, and He shall have all the glory!

III. I shall only occupy a very few minutes over the other two points. I have twisted the text and untwisted it. Now I have to PRESS IT HOME UPON YOUR HEARTS.

"I will trust and not be afraid," because, if I am afraid, it will *dishonor God*. If I trust God and then am afraid, it will bring disgrace upon His name. What am I afraid of? If He has given me a promise and I trust it, why should I be afraid? Am I afraid that He cannot fulfill it? Let not any of us get like Moses when he said, "The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and You have said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them to suffice them?" Moses had got into a questioning state of mind, but God said to him, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? You shall see, now, whether My word shall come to pass unto you or not." God *can*

certainly fulfill His promise, whatever the promise may be. Why be afraid, then? Are you afraid that He *will not* fulfill His promise? That is a slur upon His honor, upon His Truth, upon His faithfulness!

"Oh, but I cannot think that He would fulfill His promise to *me*!" You must have a very strange code of morality, I should think, to talk like that! Do you imagine that a man may break his promise to another if that other happens to turn out badly? Why, if I made a promise to the devil, and it were a proper promise for me to make, I would keep it! I should not consider that I had any right to run back from my pledged word because the person to whom I promised to give something was not what he should be! And depend upon it, God will keep His promise whatever *you* may be. "If we believe not, He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself." Do not, therefore, doubt either God's power or His willingness to fulfill His promise to you.

"Ah," you say, "I know that He *used* to keep His promise, and that He blessed Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and David, and Daniel, and many more." And has God changed since then? Has He become a fickle God? Oh, you slander Him by the very thought! It verges upon blasphemy! He who was true to Abraham will be true to all who trust Him. He has never been false to anyone yet and He never will be. He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever—an Immutable God, keeping His Word from generation to generation and departing not from the Covenant which He has made with the sons of men. Oh, trust Him and be not afraid, or else you will dishonor His holy name! You would not wish to do that, I am sure.

Again, trust Him, and be not afraid, *or else you will greatly plague yourself.* Do you not think that by not trusting God we often make rods for our own backs? We think we can foresee a great trouble which very likely will never come. I knew one good old soul who used to worry herself about whether she would have enough money left to bury her. That is a trouble which, I confess, will never occur to me—I think that people will be quite willing to bury me, whether I provide for it or not—sooner or later, they will attend to that! [Brother Spurgeon went Home almost six years *before* this sermon was published.] But it did trouble the poor old lady very much. She said that if she lived to be 80, all her money would be spent. She was then just about 70, and she died that year—so she had worried about 10 years which she afterwards spent in Heaven! What was the good of all that fretting? "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof?" Do not import from tomorrow the sorrow which belongs to it, but leave all your cares and anxieties in the hands of God, or else you may worry, and trouble, and fret, and vex, and grieve yourself and, worse still, you will also grieve the Spirit of God!

Permit me to also add that I would earnestly entreat you to trust and not be afraid, *or else you will be a worry to other people.* It is our duty to bear with sad people and I hope we do, but when there are people who have nothing to be sad about, it is an extraordinary tax upon patience which ought not to be levied! There is enough misery in this world without you and me making an unnecessary pennyworth of it—

"O you banished seed, be glad!"

You are the children of the happy God. Rouse yourselves up and spread all around you an atmosphere of cheerfulness and joy, as you sing, "I will trust and not be afraid."

If you do not trust, *you will get more and more afraid.* If you do not strive against your fear, and pray against it, you will, at last, get to be afraid to be indoors for fear a stack of chimneys should fall upon the house. You will be afraid to go into the street lest a tile should be blown from the roof. You will be afraid to go to sleep lest you should die before you awake—and you will be afraid to keep awake for fear you should meet any new trouble. You will get to be like an aspen leaf, forever trembling! Instead of being in this wretched state, the Christian should ask God that he may be courageous—and faith is a grand support to courage and steadfastness. Nothing can occur to us but what God ordains! Nothing can happen to the Believer but what God has prepared or permitted for him. Put on the whole armor of God and you shall be, from head to foot, covered against all the fiery darts of the Wicked One.

Then, indeed, you may trust and not be afraid! God grant that our text may be so pressed home upon our hearts that we may at once begin to be more cheerful if we have been dull and sad in the past!

IV. Now, lastly, I am going to praise the text and then I shall have done. O Brothers and Sisters, if you can say, "I will trust and not be afraid," how *bold* you will be! You will go forward in duty. You will go forward in service. You will go forward in the confession of Christ before men, not asking whether men like it or dislike it, for while you trust in God you will not be afraid of men! I daresay you have heard the story of a certain boy who went to sea. On his first voyage, the captain said to him, "Can you climb?" He answered, "Oh, yes!" He thought he could climb, for he had been up an old tree at home after a raven's nest. So, after a time, the captain told him to climb the mast to attend to something up aloft. As the ship plunged into the trough of the sea and then rose, again, to the crest of the waves, and the poor boy felt the mast swaying to and fro as the tree in the garden had never done, he began to feel very strange and he feared that he would fall.

The good captain, who was watching him and who thought it very likely that he *would* fall, shouted out to him, "Boy, look up! Look up!" He did look up and that saved him! He had been growing dizzy and would have fallen if he had continued looking at the waves—and then he would have been killed. But when he looked up, everything above was all right. The sun does not reel to and fro! So looking up, the lad forgot his fears, performed his duty and descended in safety. You will find that the best thing for you to do, also, my dear Brothers and Sisters, is to look up! When you have been looking down and all around you, and you have begun to tremble and to fear that you will fall, look up, look up! Say, "I will trust and not be afraid"—and that looking up will make you bold in your Master's service!

Then, again, I press this text upon you because it will make you wise. I am sure that many a man has done a wrong thing through being afraid. It is the man on board the boat who gets to worrying and moving about—

who causes confusion and upsets the craft. But the person who knows that he cannot do anything by worrying or leaping from one side to the other, who just keeps his place and does the proper thing—then the boat goes on all right. Here is a man in the market. He is dealing in certain goods and, somehow, everything seems to go against him. Now, if he frets, and worries, and says, "I shall get into The *Gazette,* I know that I shall," it is very likely that he will. But if he is wise enough just to step aside into some quiet comer and there stand still and pray—all will be well. No one but the Lord heard what he said, but that did not matter. Just speaking to God in that fashion quiets his mind and calms his spirit. And when he comes back, he seems to say to himself, "Now I am ready for anything. I am cool and restful and I can see what I ought to do because I am not afraid. I am trusting in God." If you are afraid, you cannot win the battle of life. You must have courage, and courage can only come to you through faith. Therefore, again I press the text upon you—say from your heart, "I will trust and not be afraid"—and you will do the wisest thing that can possibly be done.

Then, how *strong* you will be—so strong that you will be able to communicate your strength to others! When that ship, *Castor and Pollux,* was tossed about on the sea, everybody on board was in a tremble except one man—a little Jew whom they all despised, at first, but whom they all came to honor. You know the story—"And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them and said, Sirs, you should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God has given you all them that sail with you. Therefore, Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

Then later on, Paul said, "This day is the fourteenth day that you have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Therefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat." That was the very best thing for them all—what can a sailor do when he has not had anything to eat? What can any of us do when we get starved? So they all ate and were strengthened, and when the time came for action, they were ready for it. It was Paul's calm confidence in God that was the means of saving all who were in that vessel.

O dear child of God, if you can be like that brave man, you will be a great blessing wherever you are! And then, lastly, how happy you will be! If you can say, "I will trust and not be afraid," you will be as happy as the days are long at mid-summer and your heart shall sing as do the birds in

the early morning! And your soul shall be like a watered garden in the flowery month of June and you, yourself, shall have two heavens—a Heaven on earth and then the eternal Heaven above! You shall go from glory unto glory, God Himself being with you. I pray the Holy Spirit, Himself, to write this message on your hearts, "I will trust and not be afraid."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 27.

Verse 1. *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?* If a man has a light that can never go out, a sun which will never set and a salvation which must always save—and God is all that and more to everyone who trusts him—then what ground has he for fear?

1. *The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* If I live in Him and He lives in me, who can kill me? Who can hurt me? If He is my strength, what duty will be impossible? What suffering will crush me? "Of whom shall I be afraid?"

2. *When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.* They were both wicked in character and fierce in disposition, for they had resolved to eat him right up, as wild beasts might have done. They were successful as far as they were permitted to go, for he says, "They came upon me." Yet he needed not to lift either sword or spear against them, for "they stumbled and fell" of themselves. Such is the power of God that He soon discovers the weakness of the adversaries of His people.

3. *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.* It is then that we mostly do fear, before the fight begins, when the enemy lies encamped against us. We do not know how strong is the foe, nor what mischief he is going to do to us—and the uncertainty often brings a dread with it. Yet, says the Psalmist, "though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear."

3. *Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.* Let my enemies begin the battle, let the noise and the smoke and the dust of the fight surround me, I will still be—

"Calm 'mid the bewildering cry,
Confident of victory."

4. *One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after.* It is a grand thing to get your heart so focused that it has but one desire—and then to be aroused to the practical pursuit of that one object.

4. *That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in His temple.* Is it possible for a man to live in God's house all his days? Oh, yes Good men do not desire impossibilities. "But," you say, "we cannot always be in the Church or the Meeting House." No, and even if you were, you might not be in God's house any the more for that! But to be like a child at home with God wherever you may be. To live in Him and with Him wherever you are, *this* is to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of your life! You may begin dwelling in the lower rooms of that house even now and, by-and-by, He will call to you and say, "Friend, come up higher," and you

will ascend to the Upper Room where the glorified dwell forever with their God. It is my one desire always to be—

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

at home with my God all the days of my life, that I may behold His unutterable beauty and that I may enquire in His temple what is His will and what are the exceedingly great and precious promises which He has made to me in His Word.

5. *For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion.* If you live in God, it matters little whether you have trouble or delight, for you shall be hidden in His pavilion!

5. *In the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock.* There is the pavilion of Sovereignty. There is the tabernacle of Sacrifice. There is the Rock of Immutability and he who can get in or on those three places is the safest man under Heaven! Hidden in God's royal tent, secreted in the innermost shrine of Deity—the Holy of Holies—and set up by the Lord, Himself, upon an uncrumbling rock, what more can he desire?

6. *And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me. Therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy. I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the LORD.* David always comes back to his God. No, he never goes away from Him. Trusting Him, praising Him, adoring Him—this is the very life of this Psalm, as it ought to be of our whole life. The Psalmist says, "I will sing." But the next verse is—

7. *Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice—have mercy also upon me and answer me.* One moment he praises and the next moment he prays! That is quite right. I have often said to you that we live by breathing in and breathing out. We breathe in the atmosphere of Heaven by prayer and we breathe it out again by praise. Prayer and praise make up the essentials of the Christian's life. Oh, for more of them—not prayer without praise, nor praise without prayer! Prayer and praise, like the two horses in Pharaoh's chariot, make our Christian life to run smoothly and swiftly to God's honor and glory.

8. *When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek.* As if it were an echo, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." And he did seek it and seek it at once. But, oh, there are many who have long been called to seek God's face who have never obeyed the summons! Are *you* among that number? If so, the Lord have mercy upon you and call you, yet again! When He says, "Seek you My face," answer, "Your face, Lord, will I seek."

9. *Hide not Your face far from me; put not Your servant away in anger: You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.* This is grand praying on the part of David! He pleads the past as a reason for mercy in the present—"You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." It is a very bad thing to live on past experiences, alone. We need fresh visitations from God. Old manna and old experiences soon become corrupt, but you can make some use of your past experience. As you may have seen the bargeman down on the canal, you may push backward to send your boat forward.

Sometimes, when you have but little hope within you, you may recollect what God did for you in the past—and then you can plead with Him to do the same again—"You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation."

10. *When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.* "My father and my mother are the last to forsake me. They were the first to love me, and they will be the last to leave me, but if they do leave me, then Jehovah will take me up and He will be both father and mother to me." Just as it was said to Naomi concerning Ruth, "Your daughter-in-law, which loves you, is better to you than seven sons," so may the Lord say to His bereaved people, "Am I not better unto you than father, or mother, or sister, or children, or wife, or husband? Am I not better than all beside? Can you not find all in Me?" "The Lord will take me up." What a beautiful figure this is! The child seems deserted, but God takes it up and carries it in His bosom. "Oh, I am no child!" says one. But do you not recollect that precious text, "Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you"—you old ones as well as young ones—"I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." It is well to be bereft of every earthly confidence that we may be taken up by God alone.

11. *Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies.* "Make it clear what I ought to do. Make it so clear that I shall do it. Let me not try to excuse myself, but may my way be so plainly upright and true that even my enemies cannot say anything against me! 'Lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies.'"

12. *Deliver me not over unto the will of my enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.* "Cruelty is their very breath. Lord, save me from their cruelty!"

13. *I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.* "I had fainted, unless I had believed." You have the choice between these two things—you must either faint or have faith. Faith is the blessed smelling salts that will often prevent a fainting fit. Get but a sniff of the promises, do but know how strong they are, and your poor flagging spirit will revive! "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see." What? "*Believed to* see?*"* That is David's way of putting it. Many want to see to believe—that is our carnal way, but the faith way, the gracious way is, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of Jehovah in the land of the living."

14. *Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.* He is worth waiting upon! God help us all to wait on Him, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—196, 175, 675.

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

CHRIST'S REST AND OURS
NO. 2542

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1897.
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"His rest shall be glorious."
Isaiah 11:10.

THE Lord Jesus Christ, who is "the root of Jesse"—"the shoot from the stock of Jesse," as the first verse of this chapter might be rendered—is the very center of all Israel! And He is also the rallying-point of the Gentiles, for He has made both Jew and Gentile to be one, having "broken down the middle wall of partition between us." And now, around the one ensign of His glorious name, all the believing hosts gather with glad accord. He is the King of the Jews, but He is also our King and, with Paul, we cry, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." Let us, dear Friends, always look upon Christ as the great Standard-Bearer of all the hosts of God and let us pitch our tents as near His ensign as we can, and constantly follow where His banner leads the way.

The text says that "His rest shall be glorious," and I take it that the glory of His rest is in harmony with the glory of all that He has ever done. Rest is most enjoyable to the man who has toiled the hardest—the very labor which has gone before has prepared him for the sweetness of the rest. And the glory of Christ's rest lies very much in what He has passed through in order to obtain it. He, Himself, is glorious. His service and His suffering were both glorious. His death was in the truest sense, glorious, and now, all the rest which has followed upon His consummated service is glorious in the very highest degree. Yes, it is, itself, "glory." If you look in the margin of your Bible, you will see that our text may be read, "His rest shall be glory."

Without any further preface, let us come to the consideration of these words, "His rest shall be glorious," or, "His rest shall be glory." First, I want to apply our text to *the rest which Christ Himself has taken.* Secondly, to *the rest which He has given to His people.* And, thirdly—to bring the subject very close home to this evening's Communion Service—to show the bearing of our text upon *the rest which Christ sets forth in this banquet of His love.* The rest which He gives us at His Table is truly glorious. Oh, that we may all enjoy that rest very intensely and very specially! If we do, I am sure that you will not need for me to tell you that it is glorious, for you will realize that it is—your heart will be ready to burst out with holy song as you delight in the rest which God gives to every believing heart!

I. First, let us notice the relation of our text to the rest which CHRIST PERSONALLY HAS ENJOYED, IS ENJOYING AND WILL ENJOY.

The first rest that I know of, that ever fell to the lot of our Well-Beloved, was *His rest in His Church.* We read in Zephaniah 3:17, "He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." The idea of this passage seems to be that we had all gone astray and were lost and ruined—and God fixed His love upon His people and determined to save them. If such a metaphor can be tolerated for a moment, there was no rest for God until He had ordained and settled a plan by which He could justly save His own. When that great matter was completed, when the sacred agreement was made between the Divine Trinity in Unity, when the Lord Jesus Christ had become the Surety of His people and had entered into Covenant engagements with the Father on their behalf, then, but not till then, was He fully at rest! When the Father was able to look upon men—

"Not as they were in Adam's fall,
When sin and ruin covered all,"

but as they are in Christ, the second Adam, then His Divine complacency went forth towards His elect as He viewed them in the Person of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son—and He rested in His love. All was arranged, the Covenant was signed and sealed, and He felt that the grandest of all His designs would certainly be carried out in due time—and He rested in His love. It never occurred to the heart of God to change His purpose concerning His people. Never once did He think of casting them away! They were to be bought with a great price and, in themselves, they would be little worth buying, but He rested in the fact that He had chosen them, that He had set them apart to be His portion, that He loved them with all His heart and that He intended to do them good. His purpose was worthy of a God and, therefore, He rested in it.

He had devised a plan which would bring even greater glory to His Deity and, therefore, He was at rest concerning the objects of His love. He had set His seal to this Covenant, that they should, every one of them, be redeemed, that they should be saved, perfected and brought Home to behold His face in righteousness as the dear children of His love. And the infinitely Glorious One did, as it were, settle Himself down to rest in that "Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure." And, Beloved, you and I feel that His rest was glorious—it would occupy us throughout eternity to tell all the glory which lies hidden in that great settlement of eternal love! We talk of it, here, and it is a charming theme. We sing of it and there is no higher and grander strain under Heaven!

Now change the scene and think of Christ's rest in His grave. The Divine Son of God, in due time, condescended to take upon Himself the mantle of our inferior race. He appeared at Bethlehem, a Man-Child, having assumed our nature in its utmost weakness. He lived here upon earth a toilsome life—little rest did He know. His labor afforded Him sweet solace, for in doing the will of His Father He had meat to eat of which even His disciples knew not. But rest was seldom His portion. He had come here to serve, not to be served. To toil with all His strength, but, at last, His labors were all over and He bowed His head and said, "It

is finished." Christ did not fall asleep until His work was all done—there was nothing more for that dear and most precious body to do.

There it hangs upon the Cross, still and quiet. I see Joseph and his friends extracting the nails, bringing the body down the ladder, reverently washing it, wrapping it in fine linen and costly spices, and then laying it in the tomb of honor. Men designed that He should be buried in a felon's grave, but it was not so, for He made His grave with the rich and honorable counselor, Joseph of Arimathea. This morning, (s*ee sermon #1789, Volume 30—"Joseph of Arimathea*"—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org), I conducted you to the place of His rest where Joseph and Nicodemus and the godly women laid Him in the grave, and there He rested. I like to think of that Jewish Sabbath when He took His greater Sabbath, resting, seeing no corruption, as He would have done in that time, in such a hot climate, if it had not been for the preserving power of God and the nature of His body, which could not see corruption because it had no taint of sin about it. There the great Champion lay and rested.

I do not wonder that the angels came and sat, one at the head, and the other at the foot of the spot where He had lain, for there was something very glorious and sublime about that rest. While He lay there, He was the terror of His foes—they sealed the tomb and set a watch lest He should escape them, after all. In the tomb, He was the grief of His Friends, for they thought He was gone forever. Had they but known what they ought to have known. Had they but remembered and understood what Christ had told them, they would have realized that He was but resting a little while and that He would soon rise again in glorious triumph from the dead! I say that even while He sleeps there in that new tomb, His rest is glorious—

"All His work and warfare done."

He has performed it all and now He rests. He who is, Himself, Life and Immortality lies there locked in the arms of Death. He who makes all spirits and gives breath to every nostril that breathes, deigns, for a little season, to surrender Himself as a captive in the bonds of Death—in that very act destroying Death for all His people, putting an end to sin, achieving the eternal purpose of the blessed God and opening the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers! Oh, tread lightly over the spot where our dear Lord once slept, for in that sleep He was truly glorious!

Now, beloved Friends, our Divine Lord has gone away from us up into His *rest in Glory.* "This Man, after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool." He is taking His rest now, for His work is done. There is nothing for Him to do, or for us to do, by way of perfecting righteousness and salvation—Christ has accomplished it all and now He rests! It must be Divinely glorious to Him thus to sit down at the right hand of God. He is not now fighting as a warrior, for He has already been to Edom and has returned with His garments dyed in blood, having trodden all His enemies in the winepress of His wrath. Now He rests and with an unbroken calmness of spirit waits until the ages shall have rolled on, till the end shall come, till He shall have trodden Satan

finally beneath His feet, till He shall send out that last great summons, "Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." Till then, He rests in Glory, and His rest is glorious!

I suspect, however, that my text specially relates to the rest that is *to come to this earth in the latter days.* I will not go into the question of dates, or the arrangement of future events. If you read the chapter from which our text is taken, you have the great fact plainly foretold—"But with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins. The wolf, also, shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

I do not know that everybody will be converted, but everybody will be enlightened—and every harmful agency will be restrained from evil. If the wolf still remains a wolf, it will dwell with the lamb without injuring it. There shall be such days of happiness and peace on earth, that men shall hang the sword upon the wall and study war no more! Children shall ask their fathers what was the ancient use of swords, spears, helmets and guns, for they shall be no more employed in destroying precious lives. The power of sin shall be broken and there shall be a general spreading of the principles of life, light, truth, love and liberty over the whole earth! Well may we sing—

"O long expected day, begin!
Dawn on these realms of woe and sin!"

When that Day of the Lord comes, "His rest shall be glorious." Then shall men say, "the King of Glory reigns, His unsuffering Kingdom is established on the earth." We may not live to see that day and we cannot tell when it will be. It is a pity ever to dogmatize about *prophecy*, which will always be understood when it is fulfilled. And probably most of it not till then. When all the prophecies in that wonderful Book of the Revelation have been fulfilled—in the light that we shall then have, we shall wonder that we did not understand it before! But we do not, we cannot, we shall not comprehend its mysteries until Providence shall loose every seal and spread the Book open before us! But, certainly, whenever Christ's reign on earth begins, "His rest shall be glorious."

And, after that, when the Lord shall have let both Death and Hell see that on the battlefield where Adam was routed and ruined, another Adam shall rout the foes of God and man—when that great conflict is over and the long millennium of peace is over, too—when Christ shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father that God may be All in All, then *Christ and His people shall, together, enter into an everlasting rest.* "There remains, therefore, a rest to the people of God." Oh, the bliss of

that heavenly rest! Oh, the deep, unruffled calm of our spirit throughout eternity with Christ, for even there we shall find our rest in being one with Him, forever to behold His face, forever to adore Him, forever to delight ourselves in heavenly communion with the God-Man, our Savior and our Lord!

To me, it always seems to be the climax of Heaven to be with Christ forever. I believe in the Communion of Saints above and in our recognition and love of one another. I believe in all those heavenly employments that shall occupy our eternal life. I believe in a thousand sources of joy in that blest land, for there are *pleasures,* as well as pleasure, at God's right hand forevermore! But, as the summit of Mont Blanc rises above the surrounding hills and with its snowy whiteness seems to pierce the very sky, so the summit of my expectation of Heaven is to be where Christ is, to behold Him, to see His face and to share His triumphant joy and rest, for, "His rest shall be glorious," and His rest and ours, too, shall be glory! Therefore, prepare yourselves for this rest, my Beloved. "Yet a little while and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." A few more rolling years and we shall be in the eternal summer, in endless daylight where no eventide shall ever come—"forever with the Lord."

II. Now let us turn to the second part of the subject, on which I must speak more briefly. That is, THE REST WHICH JESUS GIVES TO HIS PEOPLE IS GLORIOUS.

Is it not so? I remember when I first enjoyed *rest in the pardon of sin.* It was so glorious that I wanted to shout, "Hallelujah!" all day long. He who has groaned under the lead of guilt, when Jesus comes and touches it and it all disappears, and he realizes that he is absolutely, perfectly, and eternally forgiven—why, he is ready to leap for joy! There are no words in the hymn book that are rich enough or good enough to express the delight of a pardoned soul! The glory of it lies in the fact that we are justly forgiven. God is "just, and the Justifier of him which believes in Jesus." A sinner is forgiven by an act of mercy, it is true, but by an act of mercy which does not sully the snow-white garments of Divine Justice. My heart never knows how to express its delight for that forgiveness which, through the precious blood of Christ, is as just an act on the part of God as condemnation would have been. Oh, how wondrous is the blending of the Divine attributes so that Justice and Mercy can meet together, and that righteousness and peace can kiss each other in the salvation of the poor, guilty sinner who believes in Jesus! Truly, the rest of pardoned sin is glorious.

Do you and I ever get to fretting after we have enjoyed that rest? Yes, alas, even when our sin is all forgiven, we are often worried with anxious cares about this thing and that—our families, our business, our poor frail bodies, all sorts of things. Oh, but when we take all that burden and lay it down where we laid our load of sin and Jesus gives us rest about it all, that *rest in relief from care is truly glorious!* It is not the rest of carelessness—quite the opposite. When I thus rest in Christ, I have done with my care the very thing that ought to be done with it—I have laid it on Him who cares for me. Now, having done the best that could be done,

what reason remains for giving my heart any trouble? I know that the most bitter medicine I shall have to take will be most salutary and I know that the sweet will not sour upon me, the Lord will take care that it shall not. He will make all things work together for my good, so I can confidently say, "do what you will with me, Lord, I have no care, no fret, no worry, for I have left all with you."

Then, next, what a glorious rest Christ gives His people *in the satisfying of the heart!* No human being can fill a human heart. It would be an easier task to fill a bottomless pit with leaking buckets than for man to fill a human heart as it is by nature. Here! Pour in worlds, as though there were as many worlds as there are drops of water in the sea—what is there in all worlds that can ever fill a human heart? We all know the story of Alexander, with the whole world in his grip, sighing because there was not another world to conquer—and if he could have conquered another world, he would have cried quite as much to conquer two more! When he had vanquished two more, he would have had a fourfold hunger for more and, if he could have won those eight worlds, he would have had eight times as much ambition for eight more! And if he could have obtained them, his hunger would have grown in proportion to that which he thought would satisfy him.

But now look at a child of God when he enjoys rest in Christ. If he is in a right state of heart, he says, "the Lord Jesus Christ is mine and the Providence of God is mine for this world and for that which is to come, and the Heaven of heavens shall be mine in due time! I have all I need. My passions shall no more lead me astray, for I am married to Christ, and my heart finds its utmost satisfaction in Him. If I may but glorify Him here and enjoy Him forever hereafter, I could not wish for more." Such a man feels like David when he went in and sat before the Lord, and said, "Who am I, O Lord God? And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" I wish that Christian people would more often feel, enjoy, and talk about this rest. If you do not know what it is, go to Christ for it at once! Some of us bless the Lord that we know what it is. We cannot yet sing that—

"Not a wave of trouble rolls
Across our peaceful breast,"

but we do feel that when the waves roll, they do not break the quiet calmness of our spirit. When troubles come, they do not disturb the blessed serenity that reigns in the deep caverns of our soul.

Now, Beloved, only one more remark upon this point, and that is concerning *rest in the perfection of our joy.* We are hastening on to the end of this mortal life. Some dear members of this Church are in the deep river even now. They began to enter the stream some time ago, they gradually waded in till they found the waters knee-deep and some are chest deep in the cold stream, but it has not quenched their joy, or dampened their ardor, or stilled their song! I believe that the happiest members of this Church are those who are about to die. My observation enables me to say that they are more joyful by far than any of us who sit here! The most of them that I know are full of holy transports and a desire to depart—a kind of heavenly homesickness is upon them—they long to be Home.

They have heard the ringing of the bells of the mother country, the New Jerusalem! They have caught the music of the heavenly harps, for the wind sometimes blows that way to God's people and bears a few notes of the eternal anthem to ears that are being prepared for it. I say again that the happiest members that we have are those who are just going Home and, Beloved, you and I are on the road, our faces are already lit up with some gleams of the Glory yet to be revealed. Our hearts are charmed with the prospect of enjoying this eternal keeping of Sabbath. The very anticipation of it gives us a young Heaven here below! We have not yet come into possession of the inheritance, but it is ours by purchase, by promise and by gift Divine. We have the buds of Heaven that we can wear even here—wait a little while, and we shall have the full-blown roses in the land where flowers never fade! I congratulate some of our beloved Friends on the certainty that it cannot be very long with them before sorrow and sighing shall forever flee away!

We will follow you, dear Brothers and Sisters who will get Home first. We younger folk are growing old as fast as we can and we are glad of it, because we shall be the sooner in the Home Country of the Well-Beloved to whom we are married and we long for the wedding feast. We have already had the kiss from His lips and we can never be satisfied till we are with Him to all eternity. Our good Lord has sent some manna down to let us know what angels feast upon. He has given us sips of sweetness while yet we linger here in the Valley of Bitterness. We will struggle on, and press on, and we rejoice that time flies faster with us, now, than ever! The wheels of our chariot are being quickened until the axles are hot with speed—and we shall soon be with the Well-Beloved—and then His rest and ours will, indeed, be glorious!

III. I will not trust myself to say more about that heavenly rest, but I will finish up with my third point which is this, THE REST SET FORTH AT THIS COMMUNION TABLE IS VERY GLORIOUS.

I do not believe in coming up to a set of rails and kneeling down to receive the bread and wine. It was never so done in our Lord's day, nor for centuries afterwards. Look at that famous picture of the Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci—our Lord and His Apostles are depicted sitting around a table. So it should always be—any posture but that of sitting as much at ease as possible violates the very meaning of the supper! Is it not strange that when Christ bids men *sit* or recline at the supper table, they will not do so, but they will kneel? Then, as it is a *supper*, the first principle with many is that it must be taken in the morning before breakfast—with some people, everything must be contrary to Christ's command! High-Churchism means high treason against Christ—that is the plain English of the matter—at least as to the symbolical teaching, though I thank God that there are many of those who fall into that error who are right at heart and true Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe that the Communion is not the Lord's breakfast, but, "the Lord's Supper," so I like to take it in the evening. Though any time in the day may be acceptable to God, yet certainly the evening must be preferred. And it never was meant to be the *adoration of a wafer*. It was just

an ordinary meal at which Christ reclined with His disciples, one of them actually leaning his head on the Savior's bosom, and all of them lying as easily as they could, for that was part of the teaching of it. The passover in Egypt had to be eaten by the Israelites with their loins girt and every man with his staff in his hand, for they had not, then, come to their rest. They were still in the land of their taskmaster and they had to go through the wilderness to get to their rest. But when you come to the Lord's Supper, there is no eating in haste with your staff in your hand—you have reached your journey's end, for, "they which have believed do enter into rest."

What, then, is the rest we enjoy at the Lord's Table?

Well, first, we shall have the *sweet rest of knowing that we are His children.* I remember the time when I longed to have the crumbs that fell from His table. If He told me that it was not meet to give the children's bread to dogs, I felt that I could answer, "truth, Lord, yet the little dogs may eat of the crumbs that fall from the Master's table, and a few crumbs will be enough for me." I think I sympathized once with the prodigal son when he resolved to say to his father, "Make me as one of your hired servants." I should have been glad to take that position, but that is not the way our Lord acts towards those whom He receives—Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him, and that is your place if you are a child of God—you are Christ's table companion! King Arthur and his knights sat at a round table that no one might seem superior to any other and, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren." We shall sit together to receive of His flesh and of His blood and, by His own sweet Spirit's aid, we shall feed upon the same food and drink of the same cup. May God grant that we may find sweet rest as we realize that we are His children!

Then, the next rest set forth at this Communion Table is that we *are eternally provided for.* On the Table there will be bread and the fruit of the vine, but, *spiritually,* there will be the flesh of Christ and the blood of Christ. We shall eat of the bread and drink of the cup, but we shall never consume the Divine food of which these are the emblems. That flesh of His shall always be the meat of His redeemed. That blood of His shall always be our spiritual nutriment. We are eternally provided for—we have manna that will never become corrupt, we have wine that will never turn sour—we have food unto life eternal. Therefore, Beloved, be quite at rest. You have, first, the spirit of adoption, and then you have everything provided for you which you can possibly need between here and Heaven.

There is something that you may rest upon even more sweetly than these blessed Truths of God and that is, *you have become one with Christ.* Do you see that symbolized at the Communion Table? Surely, there can be no closer union than when the flesh of Christ is our spiritual food and the blood of Christ becomes our spiritual drink that is a real, living, loving, lasting, indissoluble union! We are one with Christ—"we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones." I once saw in a work by a man who ought to have known better, a statement charging me with uttering something akin to blasphemy, for I was actually

heard to say, "We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones." Yes, Sir Critic, I did say it! But I quoted it from the Scriptures! Let those who find fault with that sentence settle the matter with the Spirit of God who inspired Paul to write it. It is true that every believing soul is as much one with Christ as the hand is a member with the head—as much one with Christ as the body is one with the soul which quickens it—then who shall separate us? Who shall tear the limbs of Christ away? Who shall take away from Christ so much as His little finger and leave Him a maimed Christ?

Some people believe that children of God can fall from Grace. If that were true, the members of Christ's mystical body would be severed from Him and He would be no longer a perfect Christ! I believe no such teaching as that! If I am one with Christ, I defy the devil, himself, to tear me away from Him—

"Once in Him, in Him forever!
Nothing from His love can sever."

Now fall back on that glorious Truth of God, Beloved, and rest. There is no such pillow as that for an aching heart. There is no such peace as that which springs from a consciousness of eternal safety by virtue of a living, conjugal, marital union between you and Jesus Christ, the Well-Beloved of God, the Truly-Beloved of His people. There is good reason for rest there.

A further rest that we enjoy as we come to the Communion Table arises from the fact that *we are sure of His coming, again, and of His eternal reign.* How long are we to come to this Table? How long are we to eat of this bread and drink of this cup? "Till He comes." There is nothing needed to complete our bliss but that He shall come again. He said to His disciples, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." Possibly, some of us will live till Christ comes. I do not know and I do not particularly care. This I do know—if we fall asleep in Him before He comes, those who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will have no preference over those who are asleep in Jesus, for when the trumpet shall sound, the dead in Christ shall rise *first* and *then* they 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.

What if somebody shall put his finger on your eyelids and close them in death and you shall sleep in the dust? Yet let me whisper in your ear that word of 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." I do not see what more you can need to make you restful and happy! You say you do not wish to die? Well, perhaps you never may, but why should you fear death? Why should you dread the grave? Our Lord Jesus left His grave clothes behind for our use, and He carefully laid the napkin apart for our friends to wipe their eyes with. We go not to a bare, unfurnished chamber when we go to our last sleep on this earth—

"'Tis no mere morgue to fence
The ruins of lost innocence,
A place of sorrow and decay—
The imprisoning stone is rolled away!"

Therefore, comfort one another with these words and believe that the rest which Jesus gives us will be glorious, indeed!

I wish that everybody here had that rest. I am afraid that some of you have no rest at all. I pray that you never may have any until you come and take Jesus Christ by an act of simple faith to be your rest forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 51:1-13.

Verses 1, 2. *Hearken to Me, you that follow after righteousness, you that seek the Lord: look unto the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you are dug. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bore you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.* This is for your comfort, dear Friends. If God could make out of Abraham and Sarah so great a nation as that of Israel, what is there that He cannot do? Do you say that the cause of God is brought very low in these evil days? It is not so low as when there seemed to be none but Abraham faithful in the whole world! Yet God made that one mighty man to be like a foundation upon which He built up the chosen people, to whose keeping He committed the sacred Oracles. And if He did that, what can He not do? However low you may individually sink, or however weak you may feel, look back to Abraham and learn from his experience what God can do with you.

3. *For the Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the Garden of the Lord.* Then what will her gardens be in those glorious days? When her very wilderness is like Eden and her desert like the Garden of the Lord, what will her cultivated places be? Oh, what grand times are yet in store for the Church of the living God! Let us hope on, pray on and work on, never doubting, for, as John Wesley said, "The best of all is God is with us." And if He is with us, all must be well!

3. *Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.* For God's Church is no prison, no den of dragons, or cage of owls. It is a place for joy and gladness, for thanksgiving and the voice of melody. Come, then, and let us bless the Lord with all our hearts! God is still good to Zion and He will not desert her. He did much for Abraham—He will do much for us. We may find many precious things in the hole of that pit from which we were dug!

4, 5. *Hearken unto Me, My people; and give ear unto Me, O My nation: for a Law shall proceed from Me, and I will make My judgment to rest for a light of the people. My righteousness is near. My salvation is gone forth, and My arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon Me, and on My arm shall they trust.* God will not always be forgotten! Man will not always trust to his fellow man to save him, or put his confidence in the

idols he has made. The day is coming when the King of Kings shall come to claim His own, again, and His loyal people shall see the Kingdom spread as it never has done yet! Blessed be His name, this promise shall certainly be fulfilled, "the isles shall wait upon Me, and on My arm shall they trust." It is remarkable that there are so many prophecies made concerning the isles—and that it is in islands, at this day, that the Gospel seems to have spread so marvelously. In our own British isles, in the isles of the Southern Seas, and in Madagascar, what wonders of Grace have been worked!

6, 7. *Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but My salvation shall be forever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished.* What a mercy it is to get a hold of something that will never wear out and that can never be dissolved—something against which the tooth of time may fret itself in vain! This abiding, indestructible thing is the eternal salvation—the everlasting righteousness—which the Lord Jesus has worked out and brought in for His people! Happy people who have this treasure for their eternal heritage!

7. *Hearken unto Me, you that know righteousness.* In the first verse of this chapter, there is a message for those who *follow* after righteousness. Here is a word for those who *know* it—"Hearken unto Me, you that know righteousness."

7. *The people in whose heart is My Law; fear you not the reproach of men, neither be you afraid of their reviling.* If you are true to God, they will be sure to revile you. A Christian should not expect to go to Heaven in a whole skin—it is a part of the nature of serpents and snakes in the grass to try, if they can, to bite at the heel of the child of God, even as that old serpent, the devil, bit at the heel of Him who has broken the dragon's head. "Fear you not the reproach of men, neither be you afraid of their reviling," for your Master suffered in the same fashion long ago.

8. *For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but My righteousness shall be forever, and My salvation from generation to generation.* Let them snarl and let them bite, if they will! They can do no harm to that righteousness which shall be forever, or to that salvation which is from generation to generation.

9. *Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old.* We long for God to come again upon the stage of action, to interpose in the world's affairs and to let men see what He can do. Time was when He was to be found by the burning bush, or on the mountain's brow, or in the cave, or by the well and earth seemed, then, like the vestibule of Heaven! Come again, O Jehovah, great Lord and King, let Your goings be seen once more in the sanctuary!

9, 10. *Are you not the arm that cut Rahab apart and wounded the dragon! Are you not the One who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; that has made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?* Our prayer is that God may do all this again—and the answer to our prayer is found in the following verse.

11. *Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion.* Just as they came out of Egypt of old, and with singing and with sound of timbrel, marched through the Red Sea, so shall God bring His people "with singing unto Zion."

11. *And everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.* Just as Pharaoh turned his chariot to flee from Israel and the depths covered him and all his Egyptians, so sorrow and mourning shall flee away from the redeemed of the Lord.

12. *I, even I, am He that comforts you.* Oh, the beauty and blessing of these glorious words! Let me read them again—"I, even I, am He that comforts you."

12. *Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass?* You see the grass cut down by the mower's scythe, lying in long rows and withering in the sun—are you afraid of that grass? "No," you say, "certainly not." Then be not afraid of *men*, for they shall be cut down after the same fashion!

13. *And forget the Lord your Maker, that has stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and have feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor?* Why, in the hand of God, and He can let it out, or hold it in according to His infinite wisdom and almighty power! Why, then, are you afraid? Is there any might in all the world except the might of the Omnipotent One? Can anything happen but what He permits? Be still, then, and rest in Him—"Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and forget the *Lord your Maker*?" In your fear there is something of egotism, something of your own self. Lay that aside and, as a babe does not feel itself wise enough to judge of danger, but sleeps calmly upon its mother's bosom, so do you! All is well that is in God's hands and you, also, are in God's hands if you have received His Atonement in the Person of His dear Son. Therefore, give up your heart to joy and gladness, and let sorrow and sighing flee from you! Even now, let this be your happy song, as it is also mine—

"All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to the King!"

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—337, 386.

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.

GOOD REASONS FOR A GOOD RESOLUTION
NO. 2543

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 20, 1884.

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." Isaiah 61:10.

Without any preface we will go straight to our text at once. In the words of the Prophet, we have two things brought before us—first, *a resolution to be glad* and, secondly, the *reasons for being glad.* Whenever a man makes a resolution, it should be because he has a good reason for doing so. And when he has a good reason for it, he ought to adhere to his resolution and carry it out to the fullest possible extent. I want you, dear Friends, because there are good reasons for it, to resolve that you will be glad in the Lord. Perhaps you are of a mournful spirit—it may be that you have peculiar trials just now—possibly the very heaviness of the atmosphere makes you feel dull and sad. Never mind those things which would drag your spirit down, at least for tonight! Let us be glad and if we can make that gladness overlap tomorrow and if the stream should be sufficiently strong to flow right through the week to another Sabbath—and if the torrent should be vigorous enough to run right to the end of the year—and if the mighty flood should be broad enough to cover all the rest of our lives, it will not be, even then, an unreasonable thing! I wish we could, each one of us, with such a Divine inspiration as would enable us to continue it throughout eternity, say, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God." But if we cannot reach to such a full attainment of joy all at once, let us at least take a good mouthful of it even now—let us kneel down against the wellhead of heavenly bliss and drink a deep draught of holy joy at this glad hour!

I. First, we are to think about A RESOLUTION TO BE GLAD.

I notice, first, that the Prophet's determination to be glad in the Lord is made *without any reserve whatever.* "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God." He says, "I *will,"* and then he says, "my soul *shall."* He makes quite sure of it with his, "will," and his, "shall." It is with him a firm, fixed, steadfast, unquestioned resolve that his soul shall be full of delight in the Lord! Come, dear Friends, and let us make the same resolve by the help of God's Spirit! "I have a bad headache," says one, "but I will rejoice in the Lord all the same for that." "I have but very

little at home, I am very poor," I think I hear another say, but I trust you, too, will be able to add, "yet my soul shall be joyful in my God. If I cannot rejoice in earthly good things, I will rejoice in the highest good, even in God, who is Goodness itself." "I fear," says another friend, "that I shall have trouble as soon as I return home. I am afraid I shall hear some very bad news." Let this message of the Psalmist comfort your spirit—"He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Do not keep any portion of what your hear so as to leave room for grief or fear, but, if you are a true Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, surrender yourself completely to the highest form of enjoyment and say, here and now, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God."

While the Prophet's resolution is wisely unreserved, notice how *hearty* it is. He says not merely, "I will rejoice in the Lord"—he is not going to be content with a cup full of joy—he means to have a *well* full of it, so he says, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord." The Lord is such a great God that if we rejoice in Him at all, we ought *greatly* to rejoice in Him. Little sources of blessing may well produce little joy, but when we think of the great goodness of the great God to such great sinners as we have been, each one of us who has been greatly pardoned through the great Sacrifice of Jesus may well say, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord." Then the Prophet adds, "My soul shall be joyful in my God." "My very soul, my truest and best self, shall be joyful in my God. Not only my lips, or the jubilant Psalms which I shall sing, but my very *soul* shall be joyful in my God. I will sing as much as I can, but what I cannot sing, my soul shall feel. There shall be great waves of expressed joy, but there shall be vast unstirred deeps of heavenly calm within my innermost nature—'My soul shall be joyful in my God.'"

We have sometimes seen people joyful just as far as the surface of their face. They tried to *look* glad, but underneath the smiling countenance there lurked a cruel grief. Have I not seen sparkling eyes which could not help betraying the inward fires of sorrow that burned in the heart's inmost depths? Have I not heard men sing when their singing was almost a mockery, for had they expressed themselves as they felt, they would have groaned rather than have sung? But, O my God, there shall be with me no mere semblance of joy, no feigning praise, no misrepresentation of the real feeling of my heart—"my soul shall be joyful in my God."

I invite you, dear Christian Friends—and I pray the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to enable you—to be as full of holy joy as you can be, for there is good reason for it and no harm can come of it! It is perfectly safe to take the deepest possible draughts of spiritual joy—this is a wine of which a man may drink to the fullest and he shall never be intoxicated. You may be so enamored of earthly things as to perish through that love, but if you are so enraptured with your Lord that you find your whole delight in Him, you cannot possibly go to an excess in that direction! I am sure some of you have tried to sing the bass notes long enough—I want to get you to run up the scale till you reach the very highest notes that can be sung on earth! You have sat down and groaned together in un-

comfortable misery quite long enough. Now rouse yourselves from your sadness, shake off the dust of discontentment and sorrow—and let us sing together unto God, our exceeding joy, in whom there are fathomless depths of infinite delight!

So we have seen that this resolution to be glad is unreserved and very hearty—all the more hearty because it is double. "I will greatly rejoice," says the Prophet, and then he adds, "my soul shall be joyful." You may say the same, dear Friend—"I will be glad, and then I will be glad again. I will joy, and then I will rejoice. I will have a duplicate of it! I will repeat my delights and heap them up, one upon another, as though by this Pelion on Ossa I should climb to the very heavens and sit down in the full joy of my God." Oh, what a blessing it will be if many of you are helped to do this even now—and to continue doing it!

Further, notice that this unreserved and hearty resolution is *altogether spiritual.* "I will greatly rejoice *in the Lord,* my soul shall be joyful *in my God.*" Joy in the creature must necessarily be limited, for the creature is limited. Joy in the creature may be harmful, for the creature may beguile you and allure you away from the Creator. Joy in yourself is a fiction—there can be no true satisfaction in it! Joy even in the work of God in your soul may sometimes be questionable, for you may not be sure that it is God's work in which you are rejoicing. But when you can say, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God," you have a subject for joy and an object of joy higher than I can ever describe! I thought, last night, as I turned this text over, the best thing that ever could have happened for me is that God is what He is. I could not wish Him to be other than He is—not even when He frowns upon me. Blessed be His name, He never frowns upon His children except in love! He never smites them except in greater mercy than He could show by not striking them. He is altogether the best conceivable God! Yes, He is inconceivably, unutterably, boundlessly good—let His name be praised and magnified forever! You may say to yourself, "I am a great many things that I ought not to be, but I have my God. He is my Father and I am His child, and though He made the heavens and the earth, yet He loves me with an everlasting love and He has set the whole of His heart's affection upon me! Even worthless *me*, He loves with all the infinity of His Divine Nature!"

O Friends, the thought of God should bring to our souls incessant pleasure! Think of any one Person of the blessed Trinity in Unity—think of the Father and then see how you ought to rejoice that He is your Father, and such a Father! Then think of the Son of God, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His very name is honey in the mouth and music in the ears, light in the life and Heaven upon earth! Then think of the Holy Spirit, that Divine Person who deigns to take upon Himself the office of Comforter, that we may not know a sorrow which shall not be relieved, that we may not bear a burden out of which He will not take all the heaviness and woe! Blessed Father, blessed Son and blessed Holy Spirit, blessed be the Triune God forever and ever! "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God." This joy in the Lord is all spiritual and in that kind of rejoicing you can never run to excess!

Let me drop into your mouth this piece of heavenly sweetmeat—"The Father Himself loves you." Try to get the flavor of that precious Word, "loves you." I have often said that if God is kind to you, it is a great thing. If God thinks of you, that is a great thing. If God blesses you, that is a great thing. But if He *loves* you—ah, that is an almost unspeakable honor and joy! Yet it is true. You knew once what it was to be loved by an affectionate mother. You know now what it is to love your child. But God loves you in a more intense way, even, than that, for all the loves of men and women are but the spray of the great ocean of His everlasting love. "Oh, but," you say, "there are so many for God to love." That is true, yet He loves you as much as if there were no other person in the whole universe, as if you stood alone with the eyes of Jehovah fixed upon you and the whole heart of Jehovah wrapping you round about in its Divine folds of affection! "The father Himself loves *you.*" May the Holy Spirit teach you to draw the sweetness of those words into your soul! "The father Himself loves you." Yes, more, if He loves you now, He always did love you! He has loved you with an everlasting love—loved you before yonder stars began to let their light shine down among the sons of men! Before He had fixed the universe upon the huge pillars of His almighty power, He loved you and your names were engraved upon the palms of His hands, yes, upon His heart! And He will love you when this great earth and sun and moon and stars shall have passed away. As a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bears it and is lost forever, so shall the material creation pass away—but God shall still love you even as He loves His only-begotten Son, forever and forever.

Please observe, also, that the Prophet's resolution related to *immediate* joy, though there is also a future meaning in his words. "I *will* greatly rejoice in the Lord," expresses a present determination as well as a resolve concerning the future. I hope greatly to rejoice in God if I should live to be gray-headed, and to be bent double with infirmities. But I *will* greatly rejoice in the Lord at this moment. It is true that you or I may lie upon a bed of sickness, and draw near to the gates of death, but I trust that, even then, we shall greatly rejoice in the Lord and be joyful in our God. But our text really means that, even now, we will be glad in Him. Come, dear Friends, let us, each one, say, "I will now, at this very moment, greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall be joyful in my God. Away, you cares, be gone from me, for He cares for me. Away all thoughts of sin, for Christ has cast my sins behind His back into the depths of the sea. Away all fear of the future, for my times are in His hands! Away all murmuring, all complaining at the Providence of God—my soul cries, 'Your will be done, O Lord! Not as I will, but as You will.'" When you reach that point, you may well say, "now will I greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God."

I think if I stopped now, and said nothing more, you might say to me, "You have given us reasons enough to make us full of joy and to cause each one of us gladly to cry, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God."

II. But now, in the second place, I am going to give you, from the text, other good reasons for BEING GLAD.

The first is found in the Divine *clothing* here mentioned—"He has clothed me with the garments of salvation." Did you ever behold your soul naked to its shame in the sight of the all-seeing Jehovah? Did you ever try to hide yourself from God because you were under a deep sense of sin? And did you hear His penetrating voice calling you, as He called Adam in the Garden, "Where are you? Where are you? Where are you?" Did you stay away from Divine service and did you still hear in your soul the Lord's question, "Where are you?" Did you try to bury yourself in your business, so as to forget that urgent enquiry, and did it still ring in your ears, "Where are you?" Did you rush off to some place of amusement and try amid worldly companions to forget yourself and your God? And did the voice still follow you, always calling, "Where are you? Where are you?" And were you obliged, at last, to stand shivering before the Lord, without a rag to cover you, your fig leaves all withered with a glance of His eye of fire? And did He then cover you with the garments of salvation? Oh, then you knew the meaning of my text, when you were no longer ashamed, for you were covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness! You were clothed with the garments of salvation and you could say, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God."

Let every child of God here rejoice that he is clothed with the garments of salvation! From head to foot you are arrayed in salvation. "Oh!" says one, "I have been such a great sinner." Yes, but if you are trusting in Christ, He has saved you. He has put away your sin—you shall not be lost, for you are clothed with salvation. "But I am such a poor feeble creature, liable to be attacked and tempted by Satan." Yet God has so clothed you that no cold nor heat of temptation shall come upon you to your harm. You are clothed from head to foot with the garments that will save you—the garments of salvation—yes, you are even now a saved man, woman, or child!

What a wondrous dress this is—the garments of salvation! A helmet of salvation and the shoes of the preparation of the Gospel of peace, and all between the head and the feet—the entire person of the man—is covered with salvation! Think of this, dear Friend. Wherever you go, you have God's livery upon you. Some princes clothe their courtiers in silk, but God has clothed you in salvation! Was there ever such another dress as this? Now will you not sing? Why, when you are clad in such a robe as this, if you do not sing, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! Surely you must praise the Lord. While clothed in that marvelous attire which only the Sacred Trinity could have made for you—"garments of salvation"—you must be joyful in your God! Come, my good Brother, join the rejoicing band. Is that Mr. Ready-to-Halt over there? Do you recollect what happened when Mr. Great-Heart cut off the head of Giant Despair? When the conductor of the pilgrims came back to the road where he had left Feeble-Mind and Ready-to-Halt to guard the women of the company—as soon as these poor men saw that it was really the giant's head, "they were very jocund and merry, and Ready-to-Halt would dance. True," says

Mr. Bunyan, "he could not dance without one crutch in his hand, but I promise you he footed it *well.*" So, some of the timid, feeble ones do manage to get extraordinary joy when their spirits are revived by some special manifestation of the loving kindness of the Lord!

Then, beside this Divine clothing, there is *sacred covering.* The Prophet adds, "He has covered me with the robe of righteousness." That is the great mantle that goes over all the rest of the garments. We are first clothed with the garments of salvation and then there comes an outer covering to envelop us in the robe of righteousness! When God looks on a justified sinner, He sees nothing in Him but righteousness, for He is covered with the robe of righteousness. That word, "cover," is one of the sacred words of the Hebrew language, as well as of our own English tongue. It seems to go everywhere, into all languages. The Atonement of Christ and the righteousness of Christ make up the great and perfect covering of a sinner! "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." The Mercy Seat of old was a great cover or coffer that went over the Ark of the Covenant. And God has covered up His people in Christ, as we express it in the prayer we sometimes sing—

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

When God looks at His people, He does not see them, first, but He sees His Son. And then He looks through that heavenly medium and sees them in His Son. Then is it, indeed, true that He has covered them with the robe of righteousness. Therefore, poor sinful child of God, crying out because of your sin, cease that moaning and groaning for a little while! No, have done with it altogether, and let your soul be joyful in the Lord! One of His names is, "The Lord Our Righteousness," and Christ, "is made unto us righteousness." We are righteous in the righteousness of Christ which is imputed unto us. In the 53rd of Isaiah we read, "By His knowledge," that is, "by the knowledge of Him shall My righteous Servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities." I wish I knew how to speak of these glorious Truths of God as I feel them in my own soul, but I cannot find words worthy of the wondrous theme! I have this holy joy in my own heart and it makes my spirit burn with a Divine delight! Oh, that I could communicate that delight to others, even without any words. But God the Holy Spirit can make this joy flash from heart to heart, till we all feel as if we could—

"Sit and sing ourselves away
To everlasting bliss,"

clothed with the garments of salvation and covered with the robe of righteousness!

You will have to look in the margin of your Bible to get the next reason for being glad, which is, *hallowed service.* Our text says, "He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments." The marginal reading is, "as a bridegroom decks himself as a priest." Our text must mean that because in the sixth verse it is written, "you shall be named the priests of the Lord." So, when God comes to clothe His people, He clothes them with such robes that they are fit to execute their priestly office. I think there is nothing that I detest more

than the idea of priest-craft and I hope that you do the same. Who is any poor mortal man that he should interpose himself between a sinner and his Savior? Take care to go straight away to Christ. But, in the true Scriptural sense, there is a priesthood which belongs to all Christians and I want you to understand, poor Believer, notwithstanding all your infirmities and imperfections, that the Lord has so covered you with the righteousness of Christ that you are clad in a priest's holy vestments! You have, all over you, the pure white linen which is the righteousness of saints, and you are wearing that royal miter which permits you to exercise the priesthood, for He, "has made us kings and priests unto God." We are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people."

O child of God, how glad you would be if you could really rejoice in all this! Just think of it—at this moment you are a priest unto God on behalf of the world! The dumb world cannot speak to God, but you are to speak to Him in the place of the whole animate and inanimate creation! You are a priest unto the Most High! The rest of mankind must be farmers, and vine-dressers, and tend the flocks, and mind earthly things, but you, as a Believer, have to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus and to make everything you have to do into a daily sacrifice unto God! What a wonderful thing it is that you, who once were only fit to associate with devils—you who were black as Hell, itself, are now, through faith in Christ—made so clean and are so gloriously arrayed that you may stand before the Lord and swing the censer to and fro, and let the sweet perfume of your praises fill the whole house and ascend acceptably unto God! You may stand here and offer unto God the living sacrifice of your entire being, which shall be holy, acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ, your Savior!

Will you not be glad that it is so? Made a priest unto *God,* can you be miserable? You must not! Do you not remember that the priests were never to mar the corners of their beards? They were not to shave their heads, or to adopt the common customs of men in mourning because they were God's servants, and they must be glad and rejoice before Him. Ordained to such a sacred office as the priesthood, put on your ornaments, yes, put on your beautiful robe that is all of blue! Christ gives to you a garment fringed with holy bells, which cause you, wherever you go, to sound forth the sweet tinkling of holy joy, for He makes even you to be like unto Himself for glory and for beauty, and to stand before the Presence of God without fear, accepted in Himself. What a good reason for joy there is in all this!

Now I must bring you back to the text, that you may see that there is a joy here which is, perhaps, the sweetest of all, that is, the joy of *heavenly marriage*—"as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments." "A bridegroom!" Then it is true that I, a poor stranger and an alien, am married to Christ! There is the mention of a bride and a bridegroom, too, and it is all to impress upon us this idea, that every believing soul is joined unto Christ in a true, real, mystical, conjugal union which shall never be broken. "Quis separabit?" "Who shall separate us from the love of

Christ?" Jehovah hates putting away, so He will never divorce a soul that is once married to Him. Now are we no longer our own, but we belong to Christ, and our song, the sweetest that can be sung this side of Heaven, is—

"I my Best-Beloved's am,
And He is mine."

"My beloved is mine, and I am His; He feeds among the lilies." There is no angel with whom Christ has entered into union as He has with you and with me. "He took not on Him the nature of angels." He took not up angels, but He has taken upon Him the nature of the seed of Abraham! He came here as a Man, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. The Head of all the redeemed is Christ. His name is named on us and, as surely as Adam is our sire, so surely is Christ the second Adam, our Heavenly Bridegroom! Glory be unto His holy name!

Oh, that this blessed marriage union were more fully understood by us and that our expectancy bestirred us to wait with sacred impatience till the time when He shall come to take us to Himself to be one with Him, partakers of His Throne and of His crown, and of His Glory, forever and forever! Come, my Brothers and Sisters, have I not given you a grand reason for making as your own this good resolution of the Prophet, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God"?

Last of all, to work out the whole text, we have, here, *attractive adornment*—"as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." So that every Believer in Christ is a person goodly to look upon—in the esteem of God, he is fair and lovely. "He delights not in the strength of the horse: He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy." Does it not surprise you that God should ever have seen anything beautiful in you? My heart has often melted when I have read those words of the Heavenly Bridegroom to His spouse, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me." What? My eyes! Shall they ever overcome my blessed Bridegroom? Yes, and He says to you, Believer, "You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you." So thoroughly has He washed and cleansed you, that He beholds His own image reflected in your eyes and He takes infinite delight in what He has made you, by His Grace! "He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing."

I want you, each one, to drink in this blessed Truth of God, if you can. Not only that you are *not* the object of hatred to God, but that you *are* the object of His intense delight! Not only that you never cause anger to spring up in His bosom, for His anger is turned away from you, but that you even raise in His heart emotions of Divine affection! You are thus able to hold the King in His inner chamber of communion and say Him, "I will not let You go." O Beloved, if you did but realize where you once were and where you now are—and where you shall be forever and ever—you would be ready to leap for joy! Come, then, will you not be glad in your Lord? What? Is some little petty trial to rob God of His Glory? I have said to myself, sometimes, when I have been sorely sick and have become fearfully depressed through pain, "If I get over this illness, I will give God

a sevenfold portion of thankful service and praise." I have tried to pay up my arrears when I recovered. I have thought, "I am afraid, while I was full of pain, I was very dull, stupid, despondent and almost despairing. Now that I have got rid of all that, I will let my dear Lord see whether I cannot make up a little for lost time."

I want you, dear Friends, to do so from this very hour! Go home, sit down and bless the Lord! Sometimes, even singing is not good enough to present to our God, and music cannot convey all we want to say. Then let—

"Expressive silence muse His praise."

Sit still and mediate on all the Lord's goodness to you and so keep out all sadness while you bless His holy name! I like, sometimes, to be like those beautiful lilies that send up a long straight stem and then throw out a lovely flower in which white and gold are charmingly blended, just as if they would give God all they could. They cannot say a word, but they stand quite still and they seem to bless the Lord by standing still and looking so beautiful! I like to sit down and feel as if He had made me to consider the lilies and so to consider them that I would do just the same as they do—just show myself to Him—as much as to say, "See, my Lord, what You have done for me? I was a poor, lost, all-but-condemned wretch, yet You have made me a prince of the blood royal! You have lifted me from the dunghill and set me among Your saints! Glory, glory, glory, glory be unto Your dear name forever and ever!"

While I have been talking about this choice theme, I have been grieving over the many who know not by personal experience what it is to have this great change worked within them. Dear Friends, let me tell you, once and for all, that you cannot make yourselves fit for Heaven. You cannot clothe yourselves with the garments of salvation. You cannot renew your own nature. Somebody says, "But, Sir, you discourage people by telling them that they cannot change themselves." That is the very thing I want to do! "Oh, but, I want to set a man working!" says one. Do you? I want to set him *not* working, that is to say, I want him to have done with any idea that salvation is of himself! I want him to drop that thought, altogether, and just to feel that if his salvation is to Come out of himself, he has to get everything out of nothing, and that is not only difficult, but impossible! He has to get life out of his own death, to get cleanness out of the filthy ditch of his own nature, out of which it can never come!

Discouragement of this sort is the very thing I always aim at in my preaching! I am afraid that there are many people who are made to believe that they are saved when they are not. My belief is that God never healed a man till he was wounded and that he never made a man alive till he was dead. It is God's way, first, to drag us down and make us feel that we *are* nothing, *can do* nothing, and that we are shut up to be *saved by Grace*—that Christ must save us from beginning to end, or else we can never be saved at all! Oh, if I could but bring all my hearers not only into a state of discouragement, but into a condition of despair about themselves, *then* I would know that they were on the road to a simple

faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Our extremity is God's opportunity! Oh, how I long to get you all to that extremity!—

"Tis perfect poverty, alone,
That sets the soul at large!
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge."

It is absolute helplessness and death that lays the sinner where Christ can deal with him. When he is nothing, Christ shall be everything. Have you never heard of the man who saw a person drowning and plunged into the river after him and swam to him? The poor fellow tried to clutch his rescuer, but the swimmer knew that—if he let the man get hold of him, he could not bring him ashore, so he kept swimming round him. The man went down and still his rescuer swam around him, but did not touch him. He went down again because the swimmer could see that he was still too strong and, when he was just going down the third time, then the wise rescuer laid hold of him, for he was helpless and so could not impede his deliverer!

That is what you have to be, dear Friends. When you cannot do *anything*, then you cannot any longer hinder Christ! But, as long as you can do a hand's turn, you will hamper my dear Lord and Master. Your business is just to yield yourself right up into His hands to be saved by Him alone. "Are there to be no good works?" asks someone. Oh, yes, plenty of them, *as soon as ever Christ has saved you*! The *first* thing the man does when he has quit his own works and given himself up entirely to Christ, is to cry, "Lord, what will You have me do? You have saved me, now I will do all I can, not for my self-salvation, but to glorify You and show men what Your Grace has done, and so express in some poor feeble way the gratitude I feel for the free salvation which Your Grace has given me."

Some of you will have to go down once or twice more before the Lord Jesus Christ will give you eternal salvation. You are still too good. You are still too big. You are too strong—you have such a very respectable character that you are not content to come in at Christ's back door, where He receives none but poor, guilty sinners! You are not quite naked yet—there is a rag or two of your own righteousness about you. You will have to be stripped and *then* you shall put on the robe of Christ's righteousness! You have only a bone or two broken and you can crawl about a little—you have yet to be ground to powder! When you become *nothing*—when you have no good feelings, no good desires, or anything you can bring to Christ—when you come to Christ, not *with* a broken heart, but for a broken heart, then He will receive you! Then you will be the kind of man that Christ came to save! Oh, that He would bring you to that point very speedily, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 3.

Verse 1. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me.* These are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Prophet, looking forward to the time of His coming into the world, put them into His mouth and, in due time, our

Savior read them and applied them to Himself in the synagogue at Nazareth as He said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me."

1. *Because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted,*" God has sent Christ to bind up the broken-hearted. Then will He not do it? Will He refuse, my broken-hearted Brother or Sister, to bind *you* up? O deeply-troubled, tempest-tossed spirit, will the Anointed One reject you and refuse to fulfill His office upon you? Never! It is both His name and His office to save, for He is called Jesus, the Savior. O broken-hearted one, look to Him! Hear Him say, at this moment, "Jehovah has sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted"

1. *To proclaim liberty to the captives.* Where are you, poor, wretched bond-slaves of sin, lettered with the iron chains of despair? Christ proclaims liberty even to you! Trust Him and you shall be—

"Freed from sin, and walk at large,
Your Savior's blood your full discharge."

"Jehovah has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives."

1. *And the opening of the prison to them that are bound.* There is a general discharge of prisoners. The time has come for it. Christ died to make it possible—He lives to perfect the emancipation of all for whom He died. He comes, by His Spirit, to give you the experience of it—"the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

2. *To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.* Oh, what precious words are these! Christ comes, commissioned of the father, "to comfort all that mourn."

3. *To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty 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.* This message is spoken to all the Lord's people, but it has a special reference to the Jews, God's ancient people. Happy times are coming for them in the years that yet lie in the future, when they accept the Messiah whom they have so long rejected.

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.* In the days to come, Judea shall again be inhabited and the ruined cities shall be built up once more. God will bring back His ancient people, converting them to the true faith and clothing them with glory. As for ourselves, this verse is true in another sense. If we believe in Jesus, that part of us which has been given up to waste shall yet be turned to usefulness and to God's praise.

5, 6. *And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the men shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But you shall be named the Priests of the Lord.* This was true of God's ancient people, but it is true of us, also. Let us cast away our earthly cares—let our only care be to serve our God—for then strangers shall stand and feed our flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be our plowmen and our vinedressers, but we, "shall be named the Priests of the Lord."

6. *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.* God's chosen people are His children. All the rest of mankind are only His servants, and the servants must wait upon the children whether they like it or not. Even of the angels in Heaven it is written, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" All things are the servants of the man who is the servant of God! He who is consecrated to God shall find all things consecrated to him. When all that is yours, works for God, then all things shall work together for good for you.

7, 8. *For your shame you shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them. For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering.* God cannot endure that we should sacrifice to Him what we have gained by oppression and wrong-doing. Some men seem to try to cut themselves in halves and then say, "So much is to be secular, and so much is to be sacred." Do not believe it! You are only one man, and what you are in secular things, that you are altogether. You cannot say, "So much is to be religion, and so much is to be business." If your religion is not your business, and if your business does not melt into your religion, there is not much that is good in you. We cannot say, "I shall do this because it is religion, and I shall do that because it is business." No, no! The man is one and there is nothing to a Christian that can be marked off as secular—for all things are sacred to the man who truly serves God.

8, 9. *And I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord has blessed.* A visible stamp of Divine blessing shall be upon Believers in Christ. "They are the seed which the Lord has blessed," and all men shall acknowledge that it is so.

10, 11. *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. 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.*

So may it be right speedily, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN "HYMN BOOK"—721, 758, 775.

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

THE ONE AND THE MANY
NO. 2544

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"The judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification."
Romans 5:16.

I am not going to speak at length about the Doctrine of the Federal Headship of the first Adam and of the second Adam, which is, to my mind, indisputably taught in this chapter. I have heard a great many objections to that Truth of God which appear to me to be plainly revealed in Scripture, namely, that we were all represented by Adam in the Garden of Eden and that when he sinned, he so sinned as to sin *representatively*—and *we fell* by virtue of his disobedience. Certain it is that we all come into a world that is adapted to sinners—where the babe is no sooner born than it begins to suffer pain—where winter's frosts, summer's heats and changes of all kinds constantly try us—a world not at all adapted for perfect beings. God regards us from our very birth as sinful and He treats us as such. Now, whatever quibbles there may be about that Doctrine of Representation and Federal Headship, it is a fact, and I would remind objectors that it is, under many aspects, a very blessed fact! When the angels fell, keeping not their first estate, there was never any proposal to ransom them, for each of those spiritual beings fell in his own individual capacity and fell hopelessly. But the human race was a *unit* represented by the one head, Adam.

And though to us it is a most unhappy thing that we should all have fallen by virtue of our being represented by Adam, yet here is the mercy of it—it left a way open by which we might be restored, for, if we fell by one Adam, there remained a possibility of our rising by another Adam! If the disobedience of one representative was the first cause of our being regarded as sinners, then it became possible that the obedience of another and still greater Representative might enable God to regard us as righteous and treat us as such! I shall not quibble at what is so greatly to my own personal advantage—I rather bow before what I cannot understand and accept it because I see how it is now possible for me to be saved forever and ever! "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." I dare not question the perfect justice of my fall in Adam. I should be most unwise if I did, for by so doing I might cast some doubt upon the justice of my rising in the second Adam—and what other way of rising is there possible for me, or possible for any of us?

Entering not, however, into any of the disputes that have arisen around this Truth of God, I simply allude to the fact, most dreadful and

terrible, that in Adam we died, because in Adam's sin we were regarded as sinners. And I rejoice in that second fact which covers and meets the first, that in Christ we live, inasmuch as Christ's righteousness is the property of all who are truly in Him. He was righteous on their behalf and they find in Him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption!

Our text alludes to certain differences between the consequences of Adam's representation and that of Christ—"The judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification." I shall speak about four things as the Holy Spirit shall graciously guide me.

I. the first is, THE VENON OF SIN—"The judgment was by one to condemnation." By one man, by one sin, by one act of transgression, "The judgment was to condemnation."

Notice, dear Friends, that *Adam's offense was one*. True, there were a great many sins wrapped up in that one—it would be almost impossible to mention any sin which did not lie asleep, or which was not found in embryo, within that one act of tasting the forbidden fruit. Yet it was but *one* offense. It is looked at by those who have no spiritual understanding as a very small matter, just as at this day men still make light of sin and regard disobedience to the will of God as being a mere trifle. Yet that one offense has ruined us all. When he, who committed it, fell—

"Then I, and you, and all of us fell down."

Inasmuch as he was the parent of us all, he communicated to all his offspring a tendency to sin. And all his descendants became subject to the weary woes of life and to the sure penalty of death. Think of the mischief that one sin can do—Adam's disobedience was but one offense, yet some of its consequences will remain forever!

Note, next, *that one offense brought with it condemnation.* Such is the Law of God—that it does not need to be broken many times to bring condemnation—one breakage of it and the dread sentence is passed. Had you and I committed only one solitary sin—I scarcely like to utter the supposition, for it is so far remote from the truth—but if it were so, he who breaks the Law in any one point has broken it all. It is like a chain and if you file through a single link, you have broken the whole chain. It is like a vase of purest alabaster, of matchless workmanship—if you break it anywhere, you have spoiled it and it can never be offered unto God. One offense brings condemnation! The verdict of, "Guilty," upon one solitary count of the indictment brings upon the convicted criminal the death sentence from the Throne of God. Let no man object to this. If he does, his objecting will not alter the fact. It still stands as a necessary consequence of the righteous Law of God that He will, by no means, spare the guilty, and even one offense brings judgment unto condemnation!

But what I want you to especially think of is that this one sin has such venom in it that it *has brought condemnation and suffering and death upon the whole race of mankind.* Oh, what myriads of men there are in the world! When I traverse this city of five million souls, it appalls me! It can scarcely be called a city—it is a province, it is a nation! There are two or three nations which, if put together, would not make up as many inhabitants as the population of this wonderful city! Yet, over all

this vast population the taint of sin has spread. But what is London compared with all the nations of the globe, the almost innumerable hosts that people this round world? Yet there is not one who bears the countenance of a man upon whom the shadow of the curse has not fallen. Each man must toil for his bread with the sweat upon his brow and, in due time, it must be said to each one of us, "dust you are, and unto dust shall you return." What has caused all this? It is the *one offense* which has brought judgment unto condemnation upon all!

Just think, for a moment, that this has been the case, not merely with the populations of today, but with *all who have ever lived upon this earth.* Can you count them? As well might you try to number the drops of the morning dew! The world is one vast cemetery—in many places, an Aceldama—a field of blood where men have slaughtered one another even by the thousands! But in peaceful times the people have still died! As surely as the leaves fall from the trees in autumn when no rough wind or frost drives them from the bough, so do men die in due season. "Man goes to his long home and the mourners go about the streets." My imagination would aid my understanding, but, together, they fail to comprehend the hosts on hosts of men and women and children who have died and whose bodies lie buried in the earth, or cover the bottom of the sea. "Who slew all these?" the answer is, "Sin, which brought death into the world."

It was but a woman's finger that lifted the latch, but in came that which cannot be expelled till the greater Man shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel and with the voice of God! Death, with all his train of sickness, disease and woe, came in among us by the sin of our first parents. Oh, the venom that there must be in sin! Oh, think not little of it! Children of God, by the blood of the Atonement, I beseech you, think not lightly of sin and, by the terror of that curse which came by one act of rebellion, I entreat you, never trifle with sin! There is a ship lying outside a certain harbor. It has come from Marseilles, but it must not enter the port. There is a panic on the land, the whole town is up in arms, the people will not let the cargo be unloaded, nor allow the mariners to tread our English shore. Why? Because there is cholera on board!

And what is that? Can it be seen with a microscope? I do not know. Perhaps one day the germ of it may be discovered and it may be sufficiently large to reach the human understanding. It may be but a puff of putrid air—a something unseen which lingers in a bale of dirty rags. But will you bring it on shore? No, unless you hate your fellow men and wish to murder them! And every sin contains within it a pest, a plague, an evil a thousand times more terrible than the black death of olden times—and more awful than the cholera of today! Oh, flee from sin as from a cobra, lest a single look at it should fascinate you and its sting should have envenomed your veins before you are aware of it! O young men and fathers, you who have children, I beseech you, especially, to remember how your sins will be transmitted from generation to generation!

Before I leave this point, I must also remind you that *the sin of a single moment is the sin of eternity.* Mark that well. A man drops a stone into the ocean and, by wondrous perceptive organs, the effect might be discovered on every shore and in every sea. Such is the power of mechanical motion, that the least movement in one place must affect the entire

world. But sin has an all but boundless influence. There may be some erroneous teaching that may be spoken to but half-a-dozen people, but you can never recall it. It has gone forth forever and, by that one sin you may have impregnated one person with evil and that one may pass on the error to another—and that one to a thousand—and so mischief is done which only a miracle of Grace can undo! Oh, the horrible nature of sin! I pray you, let your horror of sin make you love that Redeemer who bore its curse in His own body on the tree and who has saved from it you who are Believers in Him! It is no trifle from which Christ has saved you! Sin is a worse disease than leprosy, it is something more than death, for it brings the death that never dies. O Sirs, with tears of penitence, turn your backs on sin! And turn those eyes, yet filled with tears, upon your Savior's bleeding body, and adore and magnify Him that He has delivered you from sin!

II. the second Truth of God in our text which I want to bring before you is concerning the freeness of salvation—"The judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification."

I like that expression, "the free gift." Somebody asked, the other day, why we talk about "Free Grace." Of course, that is a redundant expression, for Grace must be free, but there are so many people about, nowadays, who will not understand us if they can help it, so we like to speak, not only so that they can understand us, but so that they cannot misunderstand us if they try! It is for this reason that we say, "Free Grace," that they may have it twice over and hear it with both ears. If we only speak to one of their ears, it may, as men say, go in that one and out the other—but if we speak to both their ears at once, perhaps the Truth of God may meet somewhere in the center of their brain and remain there. We delight to speak of salvation as Paul puts it here, "the free gift." Nothing can be freer than a gift, but, lest there should be any mistake about the freeness, it is spoken of as "the free gift."

What is this free gift? It is, first, the *original gift of Jesus,* God's unspeakable Gift. Surely, nobody can ever be so foolish as to dream that men *deserve* to have Jesus Christ as their Savior! That is a notion which, I should think, would be repudiated by every man who gave it half a thought—that ever fallen men could deserve that God should give up His only-begotten Son to bleed and die for them. No, Jesus must be a Gift, and He must be a free Gift.

And when our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world and gave *Himself for us,* this, also, was a free and undeserved gift of Grace. Does any man think that he has any merit by which he could claim that Christ should assume human form and should live and suffer and, at last, die for him? You must be mad, man, if you harbor such a thought for a single instant! Your pride must have made you insane if you can think that you *deserve* yon Cross and all that it meant to the glorious Victim who was nailed to it! What? Can you see His hands and feet pierced with the cruel iron and His heart divided by the soldier's spear—and then talk of *your own merit*? It cannot be thought of! You could not *merit* Christ—that would be quite impossible! His death must be a free gift, for none could ever deserve it. So that, on the part of the Father, and of the Son, salvation is a free gift.

It is also as a free gift that *the Holy Spirit applies this salvation to the hearts of men.* You dream, perhaps, that you are to pay to God so much prayer, so much repentance, so much faith, so much promise and resolve, so much reformation and so much future holiness. I tell you, Sirs, you know not God, nor His ways, while you entertain such a foolish notion! Until such talk as that is driven far from you, you do not stand upon ground where God can meet you. He comes not to sell the priceless blessing of His love for your paltry pence of supposed merit and obedience! It must be a free gift if it is to be yours at all.

Salvation is a free gift bestowed upon men without anything on their part to deserve it. When God saves a sinner, it is simply as a sinner that he is saved—not as one who has any point about him that can commend him to God's love. He is just a lost, ruined, undone, condemned soul, apart from the mercy of God! When the Lord comes to deal with a sinner, it is not upon conditions and terms. If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, God saves you—and saves you wholly, completely and unconditionally. I have read that Queen Elizabeth was once asked to pardon a person who had made an attempt upon her life, but who had done it out of loyalty to the Queen of Scots. She felt that she could forgive the man, but she said to him, "Now, if I pardon you, must it not be upon certain conditions?" He answered, quoting from a good, sound Divine, "Grace upon conditions, your Majesty, is no grace at all." He spoke well, and the Queen recognized that it was so, for she said to him, "I pardon you at once without any condition," and she, thereby, made a loyal subject of him for the rest of his life. So the Lord forgives you, poor trembling but trusting soul, without exacting anything of you of any sort whatever!

Further, if you do come just as you are, empty-handed and foul, and receive what He is prepared to give, He does not ask you to give anything of your own in return for His free gift. "But I must be holy," says one. You *shall* be holy and that very holiness will be God's gift to you! "But I must repent." Yes, and you *will* repent, but that penitence will be God's gift to you! "But I must leave my sin." Yes, and you *will* leave your sin, and be glad to leave it, yet that, also, will be God's gift to you—*not your gift to God.* You are simply to be a receiver all the way along. You are a prisoner at the bar, you have not any plea to urge why the judge should not put on the black cap and condemn you to death. If you should search through Heaven, earth and Hell, you could not find one valid reason why God should save you except this one—that He wills to do it by a free gift of His pure, unmerited Grace. He can justly do it through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, for He is both "just and the Justifier of him that believes."

If any of you desire to know how you are to be saved, I tell you again that there is nothing for you to do in order to merit salvation—you have rather to leave off your own doing and to rest in what Christ has done! Have I put the matter plainly enough? No, I have not, for who can make it so plain that a blind man can see it? God must open the blind man's eyes and *then* he will see it! Yet there it stands, clear and plain—salvation is the free gift of God! It is all of Grace from first to last!

III. now, in the third place, I must speak upon THE LARGENESS OF GOD'S PARDON—"The free gift is of many offenses."

I would like to stand here and preach, not merely for seven days, or seven weeks, but for seven *years*, upon those words which I have just repeated—"The free gift is of many offenses." You would be worn out, I daresay, with listening, but I would let you go home and invite another congregation to fill the house to hear this wondrous story, which can never be fully told!

Think of the *many persons* that Free Grace has saved—the many who are still upon the earth. But, if you are heavy of heart, I ask you to look up beyond that gate of pearl and gaze by faith into Glory. Oh, the myriads, the innumerable myriads, that my spirit eyes behold clustering around the eternal Throne of God! They are as bees that throng about the hive and hang in clusters around the queen bee—or stars that stud the firmament of Heaven, or as the drops of spray that leap from the unnumbered waves in the hour of a great Atlantic storm! Of things impossible to count, I speak no longer! Who shall tell the thousandth part of the stars of Heaven that once were darkness, or of the children of God who once were heirs of wrath?

Think, next, of the *many offenses* which all of these saved sinners must have committed, yet the free Gift has blotted them all out. Turn your mind to contemplate the many kinds of sin that there are in the world and then remember the text—"The free gift is of many offenses." I will not try to go through the black list. I will not begin with the least and mount up to the highest, but this I will say, if you have been a blasphemer, if you have prostituted your body, if you have defiled your soul, if you are covered with scarlet sin from head to foot till not a spot is left clean upon you, still is my text true—"The free gift is of many offenses unto justification." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," for, "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." That is a wonderfully sweet, "all!" It includes many kinds of sin—yes, every sort of offense against God.

Think, dear Friends, of the number of times that you have committed any of these sins. I will not ask you to count them, for they are greater in number than the hairs of your head, or the sands on the seashore. You have sinned once, twice, three times—begin with *millions*—and you will be nearer the mark! There are men who seem to make every breath a sin. They breathe out iniquity and every pulse beats in rebellion against the Most High. They are always sinning and yet they are never satisfied—their appetite grows with that it feeds upon. Yet in this text there is hope, even, for such sinners as they are! "The free gift is of many offenses." Poor blackamoor sinner, where are you? This message is meant for you—for you who drip with filth as you go along—you whose speech would make the cheek of modesty to blush! The free gift is for you whose hearts must be a very morgue—a reeking sepulcher of iniquity! Yet even to such as you is my text sent to declare that "the free gift is of many offenses unto justification."

IV. there is sufficient sea room there for us to sail on as long as we please, but I must come to my last point which is—THE PERFECTION OF GOD'S GRACE—"The free gift is of many offenses unto justification." I have time only to say a very little upon that wonderful theme. May the Holy Spirit, Himself, teach you what it means!

What is justification? You have, perhaps, heard of, "justification by faith," till you scarcely attach any meaning to that familiar phrase. Well, first, justification is *the reverse of condemnation.* Do you know what condemnation is? I suppose that you never were condemned in a court of law, but were you ever condemned in the court of conscience? Did all your thoughts sit, like a jury, to try your whole life? And did they, with one consent, by the mouth of the foreman, say, "Guilty"? I tell you, Sirs, you do not know how to spell, "justification," till every letter of the word, "condemnation," has burnt itself into your soul. These two things must go together—the condemnation, like a harrow, tearing up the earth, or, like a great sub-soil plow, cutting up everything as it runs along. And then comes justification, like a sweet, gentle shower, softening the clods and preparing for the precious grain that shall produce a harvest of glory. Condemnation on account of sin is a very real thing—those who have felt it know that it is. Many a man has been ready to lay violent hands upon himself when he has been under sentence of condemnation! And justification is quite as real.

Justification further means *actual acquittal.* I want you to get that Truth of God into your mind, dear child of God. If you ever were as I was for five long years, as a child, condemnation was very real to you. It was no dream, it was an awful reality. You knew that you were condemned, and your own conscience said that it was so. Well, now, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you may just as certainly and as truly know that you are acquitted and justified—and conscience, taught by the Spirit of God, will confirm the verdict! You are no longer guilty—God regards you, in Christ, as righteous. He pronounces you just and if God says you are just, let not the devil be listened to when he declares that you are unjust! The great work of salvation is fully accomplished! Your chastisement has been borne by Another and your sin is put away forever. "It is finished," is Christ's own declaration! The righteousness that God required of you is perfected by Another, even by your great Substitute, and He has wrapped that robe around you and you may wear it. If you are a believer in Jesus, what we sang just now is true concerning you—

"In Your Surety you are free,
His dear hands were pierced for thee!
With His spotless vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One."

"The free gift is of many offenses unto justification." If you were as guilty as the greatest sinner out of Hell, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, that guilt is all gone! The righteousness of Christ is yours, you are justified before God and, therefore, you are in perfect security and safety now and forever! And you shall forever adore the Divine Grace that has saved such a sinner as you feel yourself to be! God bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Jonah 3, 4:1, 2; Romans 5.

Jonah 3:1, 2. *And the Word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid you.* There is no preaching like that which Gods bids

us. The preaching that comes out of our own heads will never go into other men's hearts. If we will keep to the preaching that the Lord bids us, we shall not fail in our ministry.

3. *So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the Word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city of three days' journey.* For those times, Nineveh was "an exceedingly great city," but it is far exceeded in size by this modern Nineveh of London!

4. *And Jonah began to enter into the city on the first day's walk, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!* His message was short and sharp, there was not a word of mercy in it. There was nothing to distract the attention of the hearers from the one point and the one subject—and there is a great deal in that. We may sometimes say too much in a single sermon and give our hearers a field of wheat instead of a loaf of bread. But Jonah said what he was bid to say, no more and no less—"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

5-9. *So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed, nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yes, let them turn, every one, from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?* Note that the only message they had heard was a prophecy of impending judgment! God had sent His servant to warn them of the coming destruction and, since He had warned them that He meant to destroy them, they could infer that He might possibly intend pity towards them should they repent, but there was as yet no verbal declaration of mercy or hope. These people went to God with nothing better to sustain them than this, "Who can tell?"

How much more guilty than these Ninevites are they who refuse to humble themselves before God, even when they have distinct injunctions from God and explicit promises that whoever shall confess and forsake his sins shall find mercy! These men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment against the men of London and the men of this generation, and condemn them, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now men do not repent even at the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God! To despise the Prophet Jonah would have involved these people in certain destruction—of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy who despise the Christ of God and do despite unto the Spirit of Grace!

10. *And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented of the disaster that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not.* There is no change in God, absolutely considered, but there is often an *apparent* change. That which He threatens, while men remain in sin, is not executed upon them when they repent and turn to Him. He is always the same God. From the beginning He has been "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and

transgression and sin." If He did not pardon sin when men turn from it with sincere repentance, He would have changed His method of dealing with the penitent. But when He does forgive, it is according to His way from the beginning, for He has always been a tender, compassionate and gracious God.

Jonah 4:1. *But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.* A nice Prophet this! Jonah was a man of a somewhat ugly disposition, yet I think he has been misunderstood. He was the true child of Elijah, the Prophet of fire. Elijah was a rough, stern servant of the Lord, who felt that the indignities which had been done to Jehovah deserved instant and terrible punishment. And he seemed almost to wish to see that punishment inflicted, as he accused the people unto God, saying, "the children of Israel have forsaken Your Covenant, thrown down Your altars, and slain Your Prophets with the sword. And I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." He was bravely stern for God and Jonah was cast in a similar mold. He seemed to feel, "I have been sent of God to tell these people that they will be destroyed for their sin. Now, if they are *not* destroyed, it will be thought that I have not preached the truth and, what is far more serious, it will be thought that God does not keep His word."

His whole thought was taken up with the honor of God, and his own honor as involved in that of the Lord. There are many people, nowadays, who seem to think everything of man and very little of God and, consequently, they fall into grievous errors. Jonah, on the contrary, thought everything of God and very little of men. He fell into an error by so doing and there was a lack of balance of judgment. Yet is Jonah's error so very seldom committed that I am half inclined to admire it in contrast with the error on the other side! He felt that it would be better for Nineveh to be destroyed than for God's truthfulness to be jeopardized even for a single moment. God would not have us push even concern for His honor too far, but we are such poor creatures that, very often, when we are within an inch of the right course, we fall into a snare of the enemy. It was so with Jonah—when he was exceedingly displeased and very angry at what God had done in sparing the repentant people of Nineveh.

2. *And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray You, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that You are a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and relents of doing evil.* This was as much as if he had said to the Lord, "I went and did Your bidding, and told the Ninevites that they would be destroyed. But I knew in my heart that if they repented, You would not carry out Your threat and now You are too gracious, too kind to these wicked people." It is a strange thing, is it not, that Jonah was angry because his message was blessed to his hearers? As a good commentator says, "When Christ sees of the travail of His soul, He is satisfied. But when Jonah saw of the travail of his soul, he was dissatisfied." There are some men who leave off preaching because they do not succeed—but here was one who was ready to give up because he *did* succeed!

It is strange that such a good man as Jonah was should fall into such a foolish state of mind. But God still has a great many unwise children. You can, any of you, find one if you look in the right place—I mean, in a

mirror. We are all foolish at times and it should be remembered that although Jonah was foolish, and wrong in certain respects, there is this redeeming trait in his character—we might never have known the story of his folly if he had not written it himself! It shows what a true-hearted man the Prophet was, that he unveiled his real character in this Book. Biographies of men are seldom truthful because the writers cannot read the hearts of those whom they describe. But if they could read them, they would not like to print what they would see there. But here is a man, inspired of God to write his own biography, and he tells us of this sad piece of folly—and does not attempt in the least degree to mitigate the evil of it. Now turn to a very different portion of Scripture, Romans 5.

Romans 5:1. *Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* These are matters of fact. Not of fanatical delusion, but of logical conclusion, for Paul begins with a, "therefore." God's people are justified on solid grounds, on reasonable grounds, on grounds that will bear the test, even, of the last Great Judgment Day. "Therefore, *being*"—*now,* at the present time, this very moment—"justified by faith, we have peace." Not only we *hope* to have it and trust we *shall* have it, but *we have it.* "We have peace"—not only peace of conscience and peace with our fellow men, but, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Mark that—we have it. O dear people of God, do not be satisfied unless you can talk in this confident fashion! "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. *By whom also.* What? Is not that first verse all? Oh, no! There is more to follow. When you get a hold of one golden link of the blessed chain of Grace, it pulls up another and then another, and then another! "By whom also."

2. *We have access by faith into this Grace wherein we stand.* We come into this Grace by Jesus Christ and to this heavenly standing, this justified condition, through Jesus Christ who is the Door.

2. *And rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* Our joy is in the past and the present, in some measure, but it is still more in the future—"We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." We have three windows—the one out of which we look back with gratitude upon the past—the one out of which we look with joy in the present and the one out of which we look with expectation upon the future.

3. *And not only so, there is for every child of God Grace upon Grace.* Every line of the Apostle's writing tells of more blessing. "And not only so." Is not that enough? Justified, enjoying peace, having access into Grace, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God! What can there be more? Why, there is something *on* the road as well as at the *end* of it. "And not only so."

3. *But we glory in tribulations, also.* We are not only acquiescent in the Divine will, but, tutored by the Spirit of God, we come even to "glory in tribulations also."

3. *Knowing that tribulation works patience.* "Knowing." Paul was no agnostic, he was a "knowing" man, and all God's people ought to be the same. They are a very dogmatic people when they are what they ought to be. They have nothing to do with, "*ifs,*" and, "*ands,*" and, "buts," and "perhapses"—they believe and are sure! "Knowing that tribulation works

patience." The natural tendency of tribulation is to work impatience—it produces peevishness in many—but where the Spirit of God is, there is a heavenly counteraction of natural tendencies and, "tribulation works patience!"

4. *And patience, experience; and experience, hope.* Again I cannot help observing how we seem to go through one door just to pass through another. We get into a silver chamber that we may go into a golden one and, before we can take stock of all the gold, we are ushered into a gorgeous palace of pearls and rubies and diamonds of priceless value!

5. *And hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.* If you have the Holy Spirit given unto you, then the love of God fills your nature like a sweet perfume. As when the woman broke the alabaster box and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment, so, when the Spirit of God comes and brings the broken alabaster of the Savior's Sacrifice, and we feel the love of God poured out among us, what a delightful perfume there is! "Your name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love You." The way to make us love God is for the love of God to be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit!

6. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* Are not these very wonderful words? "Christ died for the ungodly." Pick out all those who are the naturally good people and this text has nothing to do with them! But find out the ungodly, the sinful, the wicked—and here is a text exactly suitable for them—"Christ died for the ungodly."

7. *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die.* He is very righteous, but he is very stern. Nobody cares much about him.

7. *Yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die.* He is "a good man"—benevolent, kind, and tender.

8. *But God commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* While we were neither righteous nor good—"while we were yet sinners, Christ" did the most He ever could, or ever can do for us—He "died for us." This is the best Gift for the worst of men and that best Gift given to them when they are at their worst state! "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

9. *Much more, then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.* "Much more." Paul has been giving us, "alsos," and, "ands." Now he takes a bigger leap, still, for he says, "*Much* more, then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." If He saved us when we were sinners, He will certainly save us now that we are justified! If He called us when we were dead, He will not leave us now we are alive!

10. *For 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.* You see, there are three points here. When we were enemies, He blessed us. Much more, now that we are reconciled, will He do so. If, in the second place, when we were enemies He reconciled us, how much more, after He has reconciled us, will He save us! And, thirdly, if He did all this for us by the death of His Son, much more will He do for us by His life, Reconciled by His death, we shall be saved by His life!

11. *And not only so, there is no end to the blessing.* Dear Brothers and Sisters, the Apostle seems to be always going up, and up, and up! This Paul, calm and cool and logical as he is, makes the fire burn most wondrously! "And not only so."

11. *But we also joy in God.* We are glad that He is God, glad that He is such a God as He is. We would not wish to have Him altered! The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob—the God of the Old testament, and the God of the New testament—we love Him altogether just as He is! And, "we joy in God."

11-21. *Through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the Atonement. Therefore, as by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned, (for until the Law, sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no Law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come. But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one many are dead, much more the Grace of God, and the gift by Grace, which is by one Man, Jesus Christ, has abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification. For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of Grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ). Therefore as by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous. Moreover the Law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound: that as sin has reigned unto death, even so might Grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

I have not expounded the latter part of the chapter, as time fails me, but I shall dwell upon it somewhat in the sermon.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—563, 406.

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"There is none who understands, there is none who seeks after God."
Romans 3:11.

We are told that God looked out of Heaven to see if there were any who had understanding, that did seek after Him. If there had been any, God would have seen them, for He sees all things and all persons. If there had been any good people, God would have discovered them. A good man is quick to see other good folks and the good God would soon have spied out good men. But God's description of the character of men, though we may be certain it is not uncharitable or unjust, is not in the least like that which I have heard ascribed to them by flattering preachers. It has become the fashion of the day to talk about the nobility of manhood and the dignity of manhood. I remember that Mr. Whitefield used to say that man, by nature, before the Grace of God comes to him, is half beast and half devil. I shall leave you to judge who is nearer the truth—a good and faithful preacher of the Lord in the days gone by—or the refined flatterers who are taking out of the Bible everything that is objectionable to the superior minds of this 19th Century and who vainly imagine that, in so doing, they shall be accepted of God.

Let me read you what God thinks of men in their natural state. Here is a Divinely-inspired description of their true character. "As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one: there is none who understands, there is none who seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouths are full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes." That is God's portrait of man by nature, and He knows the truth about them better than we do! And, as I have already said, He is free from uncharitableness or injustice. There is no motive in God to paint the picture blacker than it is. He gives our photographs in lines of absolute Truth. The light of God is the light of His Truth and what He depicts before us is undoubtedly just as He makes it appear.

What I want you to observe, dear Friends, is that all this is spoken of all mankind—of all unregenerate men—of all who are still in the kingdom of darkness and under the power of sin, whether they are polished,

learned, polite, wealthy, or whether they are illiterate and cast down in the very depths of degradation. "As in water, face answers to face, so the heart of man to man." Differences in station may make a difference in outward conduct, but not a difference in *heart*. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." For, after all, be it never forgotten that the human race is one! The most degraded tribes of men still belong to the one great tribe of mankind—they are our brothers. "God has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." What that savage is who has gone furthest aside from the paths of civilization—you and I would have become had it not been for certain influences which have kept us, in some measure, under restraint. The heart of all leopards, of all lions and of all tigers is the same as the heart of all the rest of their savage race. And in heart, all men are alike—they are all evil and if they were let alone, they would all go in one direction or another towards a yet greater evil. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way." And we have all wandered away from God—

"Each wandering in a different way,
But all the downward road."

The race is one, there is a solidarity about it, and when God speaks concerning men, He describes the whole race without exception and uses those great all-encompassing, "alls." "They are *all* gone out of the way, they are *together* become unprofitable." And, in order that none should escape, He uses the negatives as well as the positives—"There is *none* that does good, no, not *one."*

"Now, why is it," some will ask, "that all men do not run to the same excess of riot? Surely, they cannot all be alike." Yes, there are many persons who go through life with an almost pure morality, yet their heart was always as evil as that of those who have defiled themselves with outward vice, the reason lying in the fact that they were not so much tempted as were those others—they were not brought under the same conditions. You and I may fancy that we are a great deal better than other people whom we have known, but if we had been exposed as they have been—if we had been left of God as they have been—we would have become as vile as they. And if we have not fallen into one form of sin which men agree in despising, yet we may have gone further in some other form of sin which is so common that men overlook it, but which is just as black and vile in the sight of God! It is our common habit to judge that sin to be the worst which injures men the most.

Therefore, if you call a man a criminal, his blood is up in a moment—he will not allow you to do that. Yet a criminal is a person who has offended against man. If you call him a *sinner*, he says, "Oh, yes! Of course, we are *all* sinners!" That does not seem to be, in his eyes, at all a severe charge because it is only an offense against God! And this shows how completely our hearts are turned upside down and how our judgment is perverted. Otherwise we would at once think it a far greater offense to do dishonor to the great King and Lord of All than to do wrong towards our fellow men! We judge not as we ought and, therefore, some

of us who may wrap ourselves up in the filthy rags of our self-righteousness may, after all, be just as bad at heart as the sinner whom we despise. Yes, that very despising of another is, in itself, a grave offense against the Infinite graciousness of the God who has borne with us in our loathsome pride!

It is true, then—I am not going to prove it, I am not going to dwell longer upon it—but it is true that we have all gone aside from God and turned away from the path of holiness. "There is none who does good, no, not one." If any differ from this, I would recommend them not to dispute with God. If any still say, "It is not so," I will not contend with them—it is not *my* statement, it is God's! He has said it and, as God has drawn man's likeness, it is not for you or for me to quibble at it, for it must be so. Better far that we should humble ourselves before the all-seeing God and seek to be healed of this desperate disease which in His loving truthfulness He here exposes to our gaze.

Now let us come to the text. "There is none who understands, there is none who seeks after God." And, first, I want to show you that *not to seek after God argues a lack of understanding*— "There is none who understands, there is none who seeks after God." The two sentences are parallel and explanatory to one another. Secondly, *this lack of understanding is very common and takes many forms.* Thirdly, *this lack of understanding ought to be removed.* Let us pray that it may be removed in the case of any who are suffering from it.

I. So, first, may the Spirit of God help me to speak upon this Truth of God, THAT NOT TO SEEK AFTER GOD ARGUES A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING. Come, you thoughtful people, you who want to be right, I wish to speak with you as a brother would speak, as one who anxiously desires that you should prove truly wise in this life and make the best of it by preparing for the life that is to come.

First, let me remind you that if you do not seek after God, *you miss the great end of your being.* God has made you and the purpose of your making lies within Himself. We may say to God, concerning all men, as the elders in the Revelation said concerning all things that He has made, "For Your pleasure they are and were created." If you make a thing, you do so in order that it may serve a certain end—there is some objective which you have in view—and if it does not answer your purpose, you put it aside, for you feel that it is a failure. Why, you would not keep a horse if it did not labor for you! You would not even let a dog live in your house if it did not fawn upon you, or in some way recognize that it ought to love and serve you. And when God made us men, He intended that we should serve Him. He meant that we should find our happiness in doing His will and He has so formed us that if we do not glorify Him, we do not really enjoy life. If we are not holy, we are not happy. I thank my Lord for that kind tenderness which constituted things after this blessed fashion! O Man, would you miss the objective of your being? Would you be designed for a certain purpose and then, after all, prove to be a failure? Oh, I pray that this may not be the case with you! Surely, if you willingly allow it to

be so and, therefore, you do not seek after God, it is because you have no understanding.

Again, he who does not seek after God *neglects his highest duty.* Every honest man wishes to discharge his debts. A right-minded man will not lie under liabilities longer than he can help. He wishes to do what is expected of him in the position he occupies. Now, it must be the first duty of a creature to know, to love and to reverence its Creator. Man is such an amazing being, so fearfully and wonderfully made by the skill and power of God, that he ought, as a creature, at once acknowledge the wisdom and might displayed in his creation! It is his bounden duty to do so. Besides, we are daily fed by God's bounty—we are clothed by His charity, we are nurtured by His loving kindness, we are constantly sustained by His power—and for all these reasons we ought to serve Him. It is the first obligation that we have! Shall not a servant obey his master? Shall not a child reverence his father? And shall not we, indebted as we are to our Lord, overwhelmed with obligation to Him, see to this first and primary duty of our being and seek after the God to whom we owe so much? If we do not, we act most foolishly, and prove that we have no understanding.

Further, the man who does not seek after God *loses his truest life.* They who seek after God, by his Grace, live in a higher sphere than others do. They have truer enjoyments and deeper delights than those which fall to the share of others. He who seeks God, through Christ, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, receives a new and diviner life than belongs by nature to the fallen sons of men. You, who are unconverted may not believe it, but we dare to affirm—and we are honest witnesses—that there is a life which God, alone, can give to men, which is far more exalted above the ordinary life of human beings than a man's life is above that of an ox! There is a heavenly sphere in which the spiritual move which makes them greater and more noble beings than they could have been apart from God. Oh, my Friend, if you are without God, what are you but an impotent rebel against the goodness of His majesty? But if you have found God in Christ, what are you then? You are His child, His heir, a partaker of His nature, indwelt by His Spirit, preserved by His power, and destined to an immortality of glory like that of the Lord, Himself! Can you bear the thought of missing all this blessing? O Man, if there were but a bare possibility of securing this gift, I would recommend you try to obtain it. But, inasmuch as thousands bear witness that this privilege is a matter of fact to them, you will be, indeed, without understanding if you do not seek after God and keep on seeking till you find Him!

Yet further, he who does not seek after *God foregoes the highest form of strength.* There is no power anywhere but the power of God. All the forces of Nature, of which some talk so much, are but the ever-present Deity working according to certain rules of His own making. There is not a leaf that falls trembling from the tree in autumn but the Lord supplies the force that draws that leaf to the ground! God's own power, emanating from Himself, keeps everything in the universe as it is. If, therefore, I can link myself with God—if my heart desires to fulfill His purposes—if in prayer I seek His help and if, by faith, I get it—what a strength I have!

What troubles I can bear, what sorrows I can endure, what labors I can perform, what hopes I can indulge, what elevated joys I can obtain if I have but God with me! O Men, surely you do not love to be feeble! Every man wishes for power—that is an ambition which most, if not all of us, cherish, but the noblest power there is anywhere is that power which God gives to those who seek Him! When God is willing to gird the feeblest of mankind with His own Omnipotence, he who does not come to the Fountain of All Strength is, surely, a man who has no understanding!

Besides, let me also say that he who does not seek after God has missed *the highest glory of his being.* As I think of it, it does seem amazing that I, the creature of an hour, who shall soon dissolve back into dust and be as nothing, yet have within me an immortal spark of heavenly flame and I am permitted, with my soul and mind, to commune with God, to speak to Him and to hear Him speak to me! Yes, it is amazing that I should receive from God His own Self in the Person of His dear Son and, yet more, that I should be allowed to give myself to Him and offer to Him the daily sacrifice of prayer and praise and so to give *Him* pleasure! By nature we are linked to materialism and are but as the dust on which we tread. When it is blown by the wind and flies into our eyes, it seems to say, "I am akin to you! I am your Brother and I have come to make you hurt and to feel your own insignificance." Yet, for all that, we who have sought after God and who have found Him, are the Brothers of the Eternal Christ and the children of the Everlasting Jehovah! The King of Kings and Lord of Lords has adopted us into His family and put into us the spirit of adoption whereby we cry even to the God of all the earth, "Our Father, who are in Heaven." This is sublimity, itself, and not to seek to obtain this honor shows a gross lack of understanding—this is, indeed, the greatest folly in the world!

Moreover, my dear Brothers and Sisters, if we do not seek after God and do not find Him, *in the end we shall lose everything.* Suppose we live in this world simply to hoard up money? Is it a sublime thing to have it reported in The *Illustrated London News* that we died "worth" so many thousands of pounds? What is the good of such a notice as that? Or, suppose we gain honor and fame so that our names are handed down to posterity? Will that charm the ear of Death, or keep a single worm from devouring our body in the grave? What is the use of fame—the breath of men's nostrils—when it is gained by flattery, or by doing that which God would not have us do? Is there anything worth living for except our God? To die without God, oh, what an eternal loss is that! To wake up in the world to come and to have no Heavenly Father, to have no Advocate in the Day of Judgment, to have no Rock of refuge to hide under in the Last Tremendous Day! O Sirs, if you seek not God, you are, indeed, fools! I dare not use any milder expression than that. We are all fools that we did not seek Him earlier, but if we permit age to tell upon us and our God is still not sought, then write upon us that word, "FOOLS!" in capital letters and speak it with an emphasis, for so we deserve to be described! The first thing that a man who wishes to be accounted wise should do is to know his God and to be right with his God.

This must suffice concerning that first point—not to seek after God, argues a lack of understanding.

II. And now, secondly, let me say that THIS LACK OF UNDERSTANDING IS VERY COMMON AND TAKES MANY FORMS.

This is one form of it, *the man sinks to mere brutishness.* He lives for nothing else but this world. I will suppose that he is a poor man. He gets up very early in the morning and trudges off to work. He toils hard all day and when night comes, he returns home, goes to bed and falls asleep. The next morning the big bell rings, the man gets up and he works just as he did yesterday. Six days in the week he works and toils. On the seventh, probably, he rests a bit, but he has no thought of God, even then, and all the week he just keeps on working, working, working, working, working, working! There are thousands upon thousands of our fellow men whose life consists in going round, and round, and round, and round, and round, and round like a poor horse in a mill, never getting a bit further. They are just where they were when they were young and they know no more than they did then. They are just consumers of so much bread and meat—that is about all they are—and sometimes there is not enough of that to satisfy them.

Then look at the upper classes, as they consider themselves. What multitudes there are of them who do not do half as much as the poor man! They have so little to do that they have to invent plans to "kill time!" They call upon one another and leave bits of pasteboard bearing their names and titles. They bow and scrape and talk in an affected style and think themselves wonderfully important, when all the while they are simply wasting their time laboriously doing nothing at all! That is a summary of their whole life. You may take the lives of hundreds of wealthy men and when you have compressed them, they will not make a single square inch of anything that is worth having! Their talk, perhaps, would cover miles of the *Times* newspaper, but the real, true life that there is in multitudes of our fellow citizens in this city is microscopic, or even less than that! Often, there is nothing whatever in it, and the reason is because they do not seek after God. This mode of living turns a man into a mere beast—

"Like brutes they live, like brutes they die."

The meadow, if it is but flat, and the grass up to their knees quite contents them. If there is a standing pool of water and but few flies, and not much of being driven from meadow to meadow, then they are perfectly satisfied and they say that they have had "a good time!" Poor brutish creatures! God preserve us from being like they! These are they who have no understanding and seek not after God.

Yes, but we have some better people than these! There are some who seem to have understanding, yet they seek not after God because although they think a great deal, and see a great deal, yet they never see God. *They are blind philosophers*! A man goes out among the mountains of Switzerland, or he sojourns among the lakes of Cumberland, or he goes down to stay at the seaside and when he comes back, you ask him what he has seen. He says that he has seen certain laws in action and he

tells you that the laws of Nature are wonderfully operative. You ask him, "did you see God?" He replies that he did not think about God and he did not want to think about Him. To him, there was no God where he went. You know what our Savior said to His disciples—"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The man who has his heart cleaned has also had his eyes cleansed—and when he looks upon Nature, he admires the Laws which God has made, but he admires much more the God who made them! As he looks up to the sky in the eventide and sees the varied light and shade, he blesses the God whose breath raised up the clouds and whose pencil painted them. There is not a flower in the valley but speaks to him of the Most High, nor even a drop of spray, as it leaps upon the shore from the crest of the wave but makes him remember the God who holds all the waters in the hollow of His hand!

It is a great pity that people should go into any man's house and see, there, everything except the man, himself. They admire his carpets, they rejoice at the regularity with which the meals are put upon the table. They see that there are certain laws that make provision for the breakfast and the dinner of all the household. They approve of the "laws" which have kept the house clean and the "laws" which have decorated it, and the "laws" which govern everything. But where is the master who made those laws? Alas, they do not want to see him! They like to look at what he has provided. They like to sit with their legs under his mahogany, but they do not want to see the master of the house. Surely, this must arise from a lack of understanding! When I am staying with a friend, I am pleased with his entertainment, but I want to spend as much time as possible with him. And I can truly say that I have been much more pleased to stay with a Christian man, whose means were very straitened, than I have to lodge with some of the great ones of the earth with whom I have had but little Christian fellowship. It is the host—not his dinner—that makes the true enjoyment of a visit and, in the world, it is God, Himself, not His Laws, nor all the products of them, that affords us the highest joy! As he would be unwise who paid a visit and forgot to commune with his friend, but only noticed his house and grounds, so is he most unwise who, in this matchless world, sees everything but Him who is everywhere and who made it all! This is folly, indeed!

There are some people of another kind who, though they seem to do so, do not really seek after God, but only have *a form of religiousness without any reality.* There are persons who go to a church or a chapel, but they have no spiritual understanding and they do not seek after God. Some go to a service because they want to hear a certain man preach—if he is not there, off they run! Some go to see certain ceremonies, or to take part in a mere formal ritual. There are prayers, and collects, and Psalms, and chanting, and so on—and they like that sort of thing—but they do not worship God in it all. Others come to a place of worship where everything is done with the greatest simplicity. They like it, but that is all, they have not sought after God. They have been to a place of worship and they are quite pleased with themselves—they evidently feel that they have done something that is most praiseworthy. The Sunday

has passed very pleasantly and they go to sleep at night, but what do they mean by it all?

What do *you* mean, dear Friend, if I have been describing you? You have gone through this form of worship, but you have not sought after God. I am sick of this empty religiousness! We see it everywhere. It is not communion with God, it is not getting to God. Indeed, God is not in it all. Some even say prayers regularly, have family prayer and read portions of the Bible, too, in due season. But God is not in it all. O Sirs, if you are going to be content with the husks of outward ceremonies and of formal religiousness—and think that you can live on these—you are sadly mistaken! The true life of your soul cannot feed on these outsides—it needs the kernel, which is God Himself! Oh, to seek after God! I would rather find God beneath a shed with half-a-dozen poor working men, than I would go and see the gorgeous ceremonies in a cathedral where God is not present! It is not the place, it is not the form, it is not the garb, it is not the sweet tone of song or music—it is getting near to God that is the all-important matter! Whatever else we do—whether our service is plain as a Quaker's, or gorgeous as a Romanist's, if we do not seek God, it is all nothing—a bottle of smoke and it shall come to nothing. The outward ceremonialist has no understanding, for he does not seek after God.

I shall go a little further, even, than that, for I believe that there are some who make their religion to consist in orthodox beliefs without any real seeking after God. God forbid that I should think or say anything against orthodox beliefs! Be as orthodox as ever you can and hold to nothing but the Truth of God, but, you know, you may say that you believe the Truth of God, you may even fight for it—you may be a Calvinist to the backbone if you think that to be the best form of Christianity—yet, after all, you may never have truly sought after God! What you believe is not unimportant, but it is often *more important that you should seek God in what you believe* and that you should never be satisfied unless you really find Him in it all. You must have a Father in Heaven, or you are orphans, indeed. You must have a Savior, or you are lost forever. You must have the Holy Spirit, the Quickener, or you are still dead in trespasses and sins. These come not by mere outward forms and ceremonies, or by a dead creed—there must be a Divine work upon the inner man, the power of the Spirit of God working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. And we must seek after that, or else we shall have no true understanding and we shall obtain nothing worth having.

III. I must not keep you longer than a minute or two while I just refer to the last point, namely, that THIS LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OUGHT TO BE REMOVED.

I wish that it might be removed even now. My heart longs that it may be so with some dear friends here whom I love. I can see them and I can truly say that, for years, I have never seen them in this place without praying distinctly for them, yet I fear they are not, at present, brought to know the Lord. I would like to say to them—dear Friends, you know that you ought to seek after God and you know that you never will be happy till you do. You are often a good deal troubled about this matter. Then

why not seek the Lord at once? We have often had God's blessing in this House of Prayer and I hope that some will find the Savior at this service. Will *you* be among them? Just listen to these closing sentences of my sermon and try to follow me step by step to the end.

If you would get a good understanding and seek the Lord, begin *by confession.* That is the way for you to commence who have, up to now, neglected concern for your souls. Confess your neglect. Admit your lack of understanding. Acknowledge that it has been an unwise thing to run the awful risks that you have run, for you might have been dead before now—and if you had been taken away, where would you have been? I would not have any of you run these risks any longer! If you are of a speculative turn of mind, speculate with your gold if you can afford to lose it, but do not speculate with your soul! Do not, as it were, gamble with Heaven and Hell, as some are doing. Confess that you have been unwise, for, often, a confession of ignorance is the doorstep to knowledge. He who begins with regret will end with rejoicing! And when you have thus confessed to God, then set your face with determination to seek the Lord.

First, *seek forgiveness for the past.* God proffers it through the precious blood of His dear Son. Then say to Him, "Lord, I trust in Jesus; give me pardon for all the past." Then ask Him to renew you, to give you a new heart that your desires may be changed, that you may not have that longing look after Sodom which was the ruin of Lot's wife, but that you may part with all your friends in the City of Destruction and run from it and seek the Celestial City and joys that last forever! Pray God to help you to do so now.

When that is done, go on your knees and pray to God to manifest *Himself to you.* What you need, beyond all else, is God. I gave you this illustration, the other day, but I repeat it for the benefit of any who were not with us then. Here is a little child that we have picked up in the gutter, a poor, miserable-looking child. Look at it! It is foul, it is diseased, it is starved, it is famished, it is naked, it is ready to die! What does that child need? Now, you mothers, come and look at it and tell me what it needs. Take out your black-lead pencils and a long strip of paper and make out a list of what it needs and, when you have done, I will undertake to tell you what it needs in one word—that little *child needs its mother.* And if it gets its mother, it will get everything else that it needs! What you need, poor Sinner, in order to make you right, is this, and that, and the other—you need such a number of things that I cannot stay to make out the list—but, in one word, *you need your God.* And if you get your God, all will be right with you!

"Oh, but I am such a sinner," says one! God is ready to pardon. "Oh, but I have such troubles!" "As your days, so shall your strength be." "Oh, but you do not know what evil companions I have!" "Certainly I will be with you," says the Lord, and His Presence will make you strong to overcome them all. "Oh, but I am such a wayward, fickle creature!" I know you are, but God says, "fear not, you worm, Jacob; I will help you." Only put yourselves into the keeping of God and all will be well. Do not say, "I

shall go and see such-and-such a good man," or, "I shall try to have a talk with the Pastor." You do not need them—they may be of some use to you another time—but, just now, what you need is your God! Oh, if you stop short at your minister, you might just as well have stopped before! He who goes to his priest has gained nothing! If he would really get what he needs, he must go to his God! Judas went to his priest and then went out and hanged himself! And I do not wonder that he did so. But go to God and confess your sin, and trust in Jesus, and you will not need to hang yourself after that. When you have God as yours, then you have rest, peace, pardon, joy, help—help in time and help in eternity.

Oh, happy was the day when first I sought and found the Savior! I have never regretted it. I have never met with a man who did and I shall never meet with such a man! Come, and seek Him. "If you seek Him, He will be found of you." He waits to be gracious. "Seek you the Lord while He may be found; call you upon Him while He is near." It seems a very commonplace thing to hear me talk to you in these very simple tones with no kind of pretense at oratory. But I wish, somehow, that I could get hold of the hand of you who hesitate, you who linger, and say to you, "O dear Friend, seek the Lord!" As you love yourself, seek the Lord! As you would be happy, seek the Lord! As you would lead a life that shall be noble and pure, seek the Lord! As you would stand without trembling when the heavens are on fire, seek the Lord! As you would live forever when the sun is turned into a black coal and the moon is like sackcloth of hair, and the stars have fallen like withered leaves from the bough—as you would be eternally blessed, seek the Lord!

And as you would escape the eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord, seek His face. As you would escape that awful word which Christ pronounced and which, therefore, I dare not soften—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment." As you would escape that—

"Come, guilty soul, and flee away
Like doves to Jesus' wounds"

and may His good Spirit receive you even now! And to His name shall be praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Matthew 15:1-20; 29-39.

Verses 1-14. *Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But He answered and said unto them, Why do you, also, transgress the Commandment of God by your tradition? 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, Whatever you might be profited by me, it is a gift to God—then he need not honor his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have you made the Commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, this people draws near unto Me with*

their mouth, and honors Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And He called the multitude and said unto 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. Then came His disciples, and said unto Him, Know You not that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying? But He answered and said, Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. Teacher and taught, Pharisee and disciple, "both shall fall into the ditch." Great responsibility rests upon the blind leader but not all of it, for great responsibility also attaches to the blind *follower*. He should not follow a blind leader. He, above all others, needs a leader who can see. It is a pity that the man who can see should follow a blind leader, but if a man cannot see at all, then is he doubly unwise if he has a blind leader.

15, 16. ***T****hen answered Peter and said unto Him, declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are you also yet without understanding?* It was not a parable, it was a plain piece of simple language that the Savior had uttered—"not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man, but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."

17, 18. *Do you not yet understand that whatever enters in at the mouth goes into the belly, and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.* It is not that which we eat that defiles us. If it is such food as we ought to take, it builds up the body. If it is improper food, it may injure the body, yet it is not, in itself, capable of being regarded as sin. But a *spiritual* thing—a thought, a desire, an imagination— comes out of the heart—and if that is evil, it does defile the man.

19. *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.* What a horrible den the heart, itself, must be, then! If all these evils come out of it, what a nest of unclean things it must be! A dreadful sight to the all-seeing God must be an unclean human heart. Let me read this verse again—"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." All these evils come out of the *heart* of man, out of such a heart as yours until it is renewed by Grace. Though you sit very attentively in the House of God, unless His Grace has changed your heart, all these evil things are there and they only need an opportunity to come out and reveal themselves!

20. *These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unclean hands defiles not a man.* You should understand that the washing here meant was not such as you and I give our hands when we feel that we have soiled them with our labor—then it is very proper to cleanse them. But this was a *ceremonial washing* which the scribes and Pharisees would have everybody do, whether his hands were clean or not, before he sat down to meat, and was a mere piece of absurdity, if not something

worse! Yet they magnified it into a most important matter and our Savior, here, shows what an idle thing it was.

Verses 29-32. *And Jesus departed from there and came near unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto 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. Then Jesus called His disciples unto Him and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with Me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.* Was not that a most gracious utterance? "I will not send them away fasting." What confidence the disciples ought to have had that the people could be fed, and would be fed, when the Master gave that solemn promise, "I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way."

33, 34. *And His disciples said unto Him, Where should we find so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus said unto them, How many loaves have you?* That is always a good form of enquiry—"How many loaves have you?" How much Grace have you? How many gifts have you? How much ability have you? Are you using it all? Have you consecrated it all to the Master's service?

34, 35. *And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.* It is very amazing that they did as He told them. They could not see anything to eat, and yet, when He bade them sit down, they obeyed Him and did so. Thus the Lord prepares men's hearts for the reception of the Gospel. I do not doubt that whenever we go faithfully forth to break the Bread of Life, the Lord makes the people sit down in readiness to receive it.

36. *And He took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and broke them, and gave to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.* Notice the order of our Lord's action—thanksgiving first, and then the breaking of the bread. We do not always thank God for what we have already received, but the Lord, here, sets us the example of giving thanks for what is yet to come. For the multiplied loaves and fishes, He first gives thanks, and then passes them to His disciples to hand to the multitude.

37-39. *And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children. And He sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—495, 808, 494.

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

A MESSAGE TO THE GLAD AND THE SAD
NO. 2546

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 5, 1897,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"When men are cast down, then you shall say, there is lifting up;
and He shall save the humble person."
Job 22:29.

THIS is Eliphaz, the Temanite, who is speaking, and he is telling Job what he thinks would be the condition of a man who had been sincere. He says that surely, God's Presence would be with him, the light would shine upon his ways and then, when he was, himself, happy in the Light of God, when other men were cast down, he would be able to say to them, "there is lifting up." Keeping that thought in mind, I will commence my discourse, this evening, by observing that if any of us have the Light of God, it is not given to us for ourselves alone. There is nothing selfish in the gifts of God. The Jews were elected to receive the Oracles of God, but it was in order that they might keep them for the rest of us, that in the midst of Israel the lamp of the Truth of God might be trimmed and kept burning for the nations that then waited in darkness.

When God calls any man by His Grace, it is with a view to others. Your salvation has many hooks to it with which to draw on the salvation of many more. If a man is truly converted, the influence of his conversion will spread to others—it is an act of mercy from God to him with a view also to his children, his friends, his neighbors, his dependents. It is the same with the Light in the Believer's heart. When you are very merry, shut not up your mirth within your own soul, but sing Psalms that others may hear your gladness. When God makes you a feast, eat not your morsel, alone, but call in many of the poor, the lame, the halt and the blind, that they may feast with you, for there are many such in God's family and they will be glad to come to spiritual as well as to temporal feasts. If your face is made to shine in the Light of God, it is not that you may see it, for Moses "knew not that the skin of his face shone," but it is that others may see what a Light God has put in your countenance and may rejoice in that Light.

I fear that many Christian people have lost their comfort through trying to keep it to themselves. The manna was sweet and they had gathered more than they could eat. They went, therefore, to their chest and stored it up, and expected to go on the morrow and have another feast all to themselves. But when they lifted the lid—ah, you know what happened to manna if they kept it till the morning! And our joys will also

breed worms and stink (that is the plain English of it), when we keep them to ourselves! They are meant to be scattered abroad. In this respect, "There is that which scatters and yet increases and there is that which withholds more than is meet, but it tends to poverty."

Now, coming to our text, my talk will be on this wise. First, I will try to show you *what the happy Christian ought to do.* And, secondly, *what downcast people ought to do.*

I. first, then, WHAT THE HAPPY BELIEVER OUGHT TO DO. "When men are cast down, then you shall say, there is lifting up."

Well, he ought to do this, first—*he should notice those who are cast down.* We are such foolish creatures that sometimes, when the Lord trusts us with a happy experience, we begin to grow mightily proud and we look down upon His tried and afflicted people. Even among those who know the Lord, if they have a very charming experience and enter into high fellowship with God, there is a tendency to begin to think that the poor doubting and fearing ones are very much to be censured and blamed, or, at any rate, that they are to be ignored and left to themselves. "Well," says someone, "really it quite depresses me to talk with old Mrs. So-and-So, and I could not keep my joy if I were to go and try to encourage that young man who is always so cast down." Ah, my dear Friend, but if you begin to talk like that, it may not be long before you will even envy that old lady you now despise—and wish you were half as hopeful of salvation as that young man whom you just now condemned! Remember that when the fat cattle begin to push with horn and with shoulder, the Lord knows how to bring their fat down very speedily, so that they can be trusted among the lean cattle without being so domineering over them. The duty of a happy Christian is to take notice of those who are not so joyous as he is, to seek them out, to condescend to men of low estate. When you have abundant provision in your house, it is your duty to send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared. Mind that you attend to this matter lest your Lord should put you on short commons, too, and make you feel a little more as you ought to towards the afflicted.

The next thing a happy Christian ought to do when he has noticed and found out the sad ones, *he should go and talk to them.* "When men are cast down, then you shall say, there is lifting up." I often speak upon this subject and, therefore, I cannot say anything new. But I do wish to say over again that if all joyful Believers who have attained to full assurance of faith would more often speak to troubled ones, they might do a vast amount of good. I think, dear Friends, that you miss many opportunities of serving the Lord through forgetfulness or through diffidence. I notice that when converts do not begin to speak a little for Christ very early in their Christian career, they become tongue-tied—that is how we get so many dumb members of the Church who seem as if they could not offer up a prayer to save their lives. And what is worse, they cannot talk to their personal friends about the things of God. It is a very great pity that it is so and I think I must have an operation performed on some of

you children who are dumb. It is a very sad thing for the father of a family to have a number of children who never speak. There is a sweetness about every child's voice, is there not? There is a different tone, a different form of speech with each child, and it would not content the head of the household if he could say, "I can hear the older ones speak, but the youngest is quite silent." We want them all to open their mouths, to begin their speech with childlike prattle—then we shall be glad when they can all speak plainly the language of the land in which they were born.

Dear Christian people, try to be speaking Christians! Especially when you come across any who are cast down. Remember what you, yourself, owe to some loving word spoken by a Brother or Sister in years gone by. Will you not repay it by speaking comfort to some of the sorrowing ones? Many of you owe your hope of Heaven to the preaching of the Word. It may be that you cannot preach and if you attempted it, you would be very unwise. But do try, with such ability as you have, to tell at least to one other in bondage that there is liberty to be had, that his chain may be cut and that he may escape from the taskmaster's hand. Say to him, "though you are cast down, there is lifting up." Look for the sad and sorrowful and speak to them, and so be, each one of you, according to your ability, a comforter by the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit.

The particular thing I would have you say to them is this, *remind them of the promises of God.* When any persons say to you, "Well, if I were to meet with a desponding person, I would not know what to do," tell them to commence by quoting a promise from the Scriptures. When that eminent German critic, Bengel, the very father of true Biblical criticism, lay sick, he was very sorely tried with doubts and fears and he, therefore, sent for a young man from the College and said to him, "Young brother, it is very dark with me I need you to say something that will cheer me." But the youth answered, ,'My dear Sir, you are an old man, you cannot expect me to say anything that can comfort *you*." "But," said Bengel, "you are a student of divinity and you will have to speak to men, like me, who are cast down, if you are to do any real service in the ministry. I hope you will have something cheering to say to me." "Then, Sir," the student replied, "I do not know that I can say anything to you except that, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'"

"Ah!" exclaimed Bengel, "what better thing could you have said? You have opened a window for me." When that great saint and preacher, Augustine, lay dying—and I venture to say of Augustine that among all who were born of women, there has hardly ever been a greater than he—his mind was equal to any philosophy for its depth, its length and its breadth. And as an instructor in theology he still remains, under Christ, next to the Apostle Paul, the master-teacher of the churches—yet, as he lay dying, he asked to have certain texts of Scripture printed in large capitals. Which do you suppose he chose? You may think that he selected some deep and mysterious passage about the high doctrine which he so greatly loved, but he did nothing of the kind. He chose those texts

of Scripture which we commonly quote to sinking sinners—such as these—"He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." And that great saint feasted his dying eyes on the texts which we usually give to babes in Christ's faith, or those who are seeking the Savior, for they suited him just then!

I want you who are very happy, you whom the Lord has made joyous and glad so that you keep high festival from January to December, and all your days seem like Heaven upon earth—and there are some of us who have come to that blessed point—to be sure to tell others those rich and gracious words of God which abound in the Scriptures! Have them at your fingertips, so that you can find them in the Bible. Have them on the end of your tongue, so that you can quote them without turning to the Bible! Have them in the very center of your heart, so that they shall cheer and warm you, and that the heat from them shall radiate to warm others! It is a very bad stove that lets all the heat go out at the top of the chimney—we need a grate that will throw the warmth into the room. I pray that God may make us distributors of joy among those who have little or none of it in themselves.

We ought, with those who are cast down, not only to tell them the promises, but *we should tell them our own experience.* A recital of our personal experience of God's goodness often helps a poor soul who is in deep trial. Just draw a chair up and sit by the sick one's bedside, and say, "I sought the Lord and He heard me." "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." If you can tell something that happened to you when you were in a condition similar to that of the person you are trying to comfort, you have hit the nail on the head. Who can cheer the widow like those of you who are widows? Who can comfort a bereaved mother like one who has been, herself, bereaved? Who can speak with a man in a great business trial like one who has been in much the same business and has been a loser, too? You feel so glad, somehow, that there is sympathy left in the world, that there is somebody whose face has been furrowed and tear-stained like your own. So, tell your own experience, dear Friends. If you haven't any, do not tell it—but if you have, spread it abroad to the honor of your great Father's name that others may be encouraged. Tell them, when they are cast down, that there *is* lifting up, for you were cast down and you were lifted up! Tell them that God deals thus with His children, and brings them low on purpose that they may see the power of His hand when He lifts them up!

If you do this, *you may hope to be successful in cheering other people.* Our text says, "When men are cast down, then you shall say, there is lifting up; and He shall save the humble person." And as the next verse puts it, very often the good man will "deliver the island of the innocent." When it is in danger, the godly man shall interpose and God will hear his prayer, and God's suffering people shall be screened from danger. To all of you who are very joyful and happy, I would say—do not go to bed until you have found somebody who is sitting in darkness, to whom you can

say, "Friend, the Lord has, by His Grace, made my lamp burn very brightly, so I have brought it to you, that your lamp may be lighted, too." There is so much misery in this world that none of us ought to add to it. Some, alas, do so by their nasty speeches, their cross-grained tempers, their cutting, sarcastic observations and, sometimes, by their slanderous judgments. Let us, on the contrary, seek to increase happiness and joy wherever we can! Let us try to cheer all the disconsolate and spread throughout this weary world some of that savor of rest which the Lord smelled of old in Noah's sacrifice, and which He makes us, also, to rejoice in as we take Christ's yoke upon us and learn of Him, and so find rest unto our souls.

II. Now, secondly, I will pass on to tell you WHAT DOWNCAST PEOPLE OUGHT TO DO.

What should they do when we speak to them in the spirit I have described? Ought they not to respond to our desire to comfort them? You know, dear Friends, you cannot comfort a man against his will. You may lead a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink. You may bring forward the most cheering promises, but you cannot lay them home to the heart that is weary if it refuses to receive them. What ought those who are cast down to do in order to help us in the task of cheering them?

Well, first, *they should remember that they are not infallible.* The most infallible people I have seen are those who are very much cast down, for they know so much better than we do who try to comfort them. "Yes, yes," they exclaim, "that is all very well for you to talk like that, but if you were in our circumstances, it would be a very different thing." Then you quote what you judge to be a suitable promise, but they say, "that does not apply to our case," and they spy out some little real or supposed difference by which they escape from the comfort you are so anxious to administer to them. Some people are wonderfully ingenious in inventing a great variety of processes of self-torture. In the black days of the Spanish Inquisition, with their thumbscrews, and their racks, and their Virgin's embrace, and other diabolical things, they went a very long way in torturing their fellow men, but even the Spanish Inquisition had nothing like as much cleverness as the little inquisition that men and women set up in their own souls with which to torture themselves!

About a month ago, you remember that my text was concerning those fools who abhor all manner of meat [Sermon #1824, Volume 31—*The History of Sundry Fools*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org] and there are still some persons of that kind left in the world! This dish is too hot and that is too cold. This steak is too tender and that other is too tough—they do not like this drink because it is so sweet, others cry out because it is so sour—their food is never cooked so as to suit them and, "their soul abhors all manner of meat." My dear Friend, without being in the least sarcastic, but speaking to you very tenderly, I should like to hint that you do not know everything, after all. Though you may be a peer in the realm of misery, yet all

wisdom does not lie with peers, in whatever house they may dwell! They sometimes make mistakes and, perhaps, you, also, are making a mistake just now. Is it not just possible that some of us know at least a little which you do not know, which might really help you in your time of trouble? There is a saying that "lookers-on see more than players," and I believe that, often, lookers-on can see the needs of a man's case better than he can see them himself! If you were not much of a seaman, and were out at sea, tossed up and down, and almost ready to perish through the fury of the waves, I think you ought not to be above taking warning from the signal of some old sailor who can tell you just what you ought to do in the hour of your distress. Should you not be willing to say, "That man is not so much troubled as I am. His brain is clearer, his heart is calmer, I should not wonder but what he might direct me rightly"?

The way for you sad souls to help us to comfort you is for us to see that you are willing to receive the message that the comforter is anxious to bring you. Then the battle is well begun and will soon end in a victory. Yet, how often, when we try to cheer the downcast, we meet with many who say, "We will never be convinced by that style of argument. It may be very good reasoning for some people, but it would never affect us." If it had so happened that the style of address had been quite different. If the earnest pleader had spoken from quite another quarter of the heavens of the Truth of God, such a hearer would have said, "That is not the way to persuade me. There may be a good deal for some minds in that style of talking, but to persons of my disposition and of my peculiar culture, there is no force about it." I have met with this gentleman numbers of times and I have heard him confute himself again and again. He has said today what he denied yesterday, and will repeat tomorrow! It has been his method to constantly say and to unsay, only he must always hinder all who would be the means of comforting him! I wish that any of us who may be in that state of mind would try to get out of it because if there is a good thing to be had, we ought not to need much persuasion to accept it—and if this good thing should be peculiarly necessary to our welfare and somebody who cannot have any motive but our good should entreat us to think of it—I fancy that it would be a sensible thing on our part to give a sober and discreet hearing to what he has to say.

Why, ordinarily, when we are unprejudiced, if we are driving along a road and somebody holds up his hands to alarm us, we pull up to know what he needs and if anybody were to shout at our door in the middle of the night, we would be anxious to enquire what was the reason for the disturbance. If there is a fire near us, we are usually ready enough to be warned, or if there is any good news to be heard, we are usually eager to be informed concerning it. And it is a strange thing that in matters which relate to our higher nature, *our immortal soul* which is to live forever in happiness or woe, we are so apt to refuse instruction and turn a deaf ear to those who seek our good! I beg you, dear Friends, to believe that in these matters you are not infallible, and that some people know more than you do!

Next to that, you should be willing to *believe what is reported to you by credible persons.* Suppose any of us who have been troubled as you now are troubled, come to you and say, "Dear Friend, you will get out of this horrible pit and miry clay; he that is cast down, as you now are, will be lifted up again. You are feeling the burden of sin, but there is mercy and pardon even for you. You say that you have no strength, but there is One who is both able and willing to give you strength. I went to the Lord when I was just as downcast as you now are and when I rested wholly on Him, I found mercy, and if you will do the same, you will find mercy, too. Do you not think that you ought to believe my testimony? Do you imagine that I would deceive you? I know your sorrow of heart makes you feel a little bitter, yet do not say, in your haste, 'All men are liars,' for there are many who can join me in testifying to the Lord's pardoning mercy. If it is a matter touching your body, you will trust yourself with the doctor when you believe he has some ability as a physician and, in like manner, ought you not, when Christian people earnestly tell you the Truth about the Good Physician, to say to yourself, 'They would not deceive me. They are speaking in accordance with God's Word. I will believe them and I will believe God, and I will not doubt that through faith in Christ I shall have as happy an issue out of my soul-trouble as they have had'? If you will not go as far as that, you must permit me to say that I think you are acting very wrongly and that I really fear you desire to remain somewhat in the dark. I pray you, believe first, that you are not infallible and believe next, that which Christians testify to you.

Especially, dear sad Heart, *believe the great Truth of my text*— "When men are cast down, there is lifting up." Let me ask why you are cast down. "Oh," you cry, "I am so sad because of my sin." Then listen—"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Oh, that you would believe these testimonies of God concerning the putting away of sin and not be cast down any longer! "But," you say, "I have no righteousness and I cannot be accepted of God without a righteousness. I thought I had one, once, but I see that it is only a heap of filthy rags." Just so. I am glad you have discovered that fact, but the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth and worked out a perfect righteousness which He puts upon every believing sinner! The righteousness of Christ will be set to your account and imputed to you, if you believe in Him! And then, with His spotless vesture on, you shall be, even in the sight of the Most High, holy as the Holy One! You are cast down, but "there is lifting up."

"Yes," you say, "I know that the Lord says that there is lifting up, but I am so weak I cannot do anything." Should you be cast down about that? The Lord Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, is able to give you boundless strength. There is nothing that you will be called upon to do but what you shall be enabled to do if you will but trust the Lord. He will

be your strength! He will help you to repent! He will help you to believe! He will help you to be gracious, to persevere, to resist temptation and to conquer sin if you will only trust Him! You are cast down, but you have no need to be, for "there is lifting up." I do not mind what it is about which you are cast down, dear Soul, if you will but trust. All things are possible to him that believes. Many of us have found it so ourselves, therefore we pray you to do as we have done—cease from all confidence in yourself and rest wholly in Christ—for so shall you certainly find eternal salvation.

Do not neglect to notice the second part of the text, for there is something else to be believed there—that *God will save the humble*. The margin has it, "He shall save him that has low eyes." The man who looks low. Now, dear Friends, are you a man who looks low? Some men are always looking up to the stars—their heads are swimming with conceit of their own excellence. God will not save such people—at least not while they continue to be so proud. He will bring you down, if you are as high as that in your own estimation, for God will not give His Glory unto another. But if you are a man who looks low, He will save you. You have been looking to yourself, have you? You cannot see anything bright *there*—all is dark. I am glad it is so, for you are the sort of man God delights to save!

You have been looking down to the earth and you wondered you were not in your grave, or in Hell. That is right—you are the sort of man on whom God looks with approval! You thought that the very poorest of His people were worth ten thousand times as much as you were. You have envied the doorkeeper in the House of God. You are the sort of man God will save! We have some people about who are so big, so good, so intelligent, so wonderfully cultured and altogether such superior persons, that they cannot be content in any ordinary position. But these very superior persons, in their own opinion, are generally despised by God and by men, too! But those who think nothing of themselves, those who feel that they deserve only condemnation from God and who say that if He will but save them, it will be all of Grace, the gratitude for which they can never express—these are the people whom the text tells us that God will save!

I like to hear sinners give themselves a bad character—I mean, not in pretense, but in real earnest. There was a Brother came to me, the other night, in deep distress of soul. I let him tell me all his case. By what he said, he seemed to have been a terrible sinner, and when he had gone through the long black list, I said, as I looked at him, "You are the very man Jesus Christ came to save." And then I began to pick out the texts of Scripture that suited his case. I know he thought Jesus Christ came to save good people, but *nowhere in the Bible is there anything of that kind*, though we are told that, "Christ died for the ungodly." I got my poor sinful friend to see that Christ came to take the place of the guilty and that great Truth of Substitution laid hold upon him! I would that you might be led to the same point, and to say, "I am a sinner and I trust the sinners' Savior." If you are cast down on account of your sin, "there is lifting

up." God will save the humble, the man or woman of low eyes. If you are as nothing in your own sight, God will save you! If you are less than nothing and yet trust Christ, He will be your All in All. I would that every downcast soul in the world would simply believe the promise of God and rest on it, trusting in Jesus and in Jesus only!

I have just two observations to make and then I have done my sermon. First, what a very little difference there is, after all, between those who are up and those who are down! You, my Brother, are full of joy and you begin to comfort a man who has no joy at all. He tells you what a sinner he is and if you feel as you ought, you say to yourself, "I was once just the same as this man now is, only perhaps he feels his sin more than I did." And when you comfort and direct him, so that he says, "My faith would touch the hem of Christ's garment," I know it brings the tears into your eyes and you say, "I will do the same. It may be that my past faith has been all a mistake, so I will begin again." I like to meet with people who are always beginning, just resting in Christ after 30 years' experience, as they did at the first, and saying, "I am nothing, but Christ is everything. I am more and more decreasing, that He may more and more increase and fill the full circle of my being to its utmost bound."

Then, do you not think it would be a good thing if those who are very happy and those who are very miserable, would alike give up walking by their feelings and would, both of them, live by faith? If there were two women in Sarepta, and one of them had a bushel of meal and a great keg of oil—and the other had only a little oil in a cruse and a handful of meal in the barrel—if they both lived by faith, it would not make any difference whether they had much or little meal and oil. Of the two, I should think that the one who had the big barrel would begin to see the meal diminish—and she might fret—while the woman who had so little would never see her handful diminish, so she would not fret, for she lived by a miracle of faith! And I should think that the rich woman had better get down to be as poor as the other woman and live in the best possible way—by faith in God! I find that I cannot get on when I live by my feelings. They are like a barometer, sometimes they point to, "fair," sometimes to, "much rain." There is very little in our feelings that is to be depended upon! The air may have something to do with them, or they may be affected by what we wear, or what we eat, or with the last person who spoke to us—the most unreliable things in the world are our own feelings! Let us, each one, say, "Lord, I will believe You though I feel heavy and dull. Lord, I will still believe You, though I am now light and joyful. Lord, my hope is in Your Son when I cannot see any evidence of Grace in my soul—and my trust is in your Son alone when all my evidences are bright and clear."

Our poor feelings may depend on which way the wind is blowing! When a man goes to France on business three times a week, he is not very particular to ask what sort of passage he will be likely to have. It is those who play at traveling that need to have the water as smooth as glass! So, children of God who do real business with their Heavenly Fa-

ther come to be almost indifferent whether they are very glad or very sad, for, after all, the safety of the man who crosses the sea does not depend upon his *feelings*, but on the boat in which he is sailing! So, our safety lies in the stability of the Christ to whom we have committed ourselves—not in our feelings which are as variable as the vapors that fill the sky. "Trust you in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Put down your own feelings and lift up the Cross of Christ! Cling to Him and say, with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." So shall it be well with you, both now and forever. The Lord bless you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *JOB 23.*

We shall read, this evening, in the Book of Job. May the good Spirit instruct us during our reading! Here we shall see Job in a very melancholy plight, grievously distressed in mind and yet, for all that, holding fast to his God. We do not want any of you to get into this gloomy condition, but if you are in such a state as that, or if you ever should be, may you behave as well as Job did! It needs a deal of Divine Grace to travel all right in the dark, to keep in the good way when you cannot see it, to cling to God when you cannot even feel that He is near you. But the Lord can give Grace even for such an emergency as that.

Verses 1, 2. *Then Job answered and said, Even today is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning.* Job admitted that he groaned, but he claimed that he had good reason for doing so—that, indeed, the source of his grief was greater than the streams of his grief—so that he could not, even with his groans and tears, express half the anguish that he felt.

3, 4. *Oh that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat! I would order my cause before Him and fill my mouth with arguments.* Good men are washed towards God even by the rough waves of their grief. And when their sorrows are deepest, their highest desire is not to escape from them, but to get at their God. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" Job wanted to spread out his whole case before the Lord, to argue it with Him, to present his petitions to the Most High and to find out from God why He was contending with him. It is all right with you, Brothers and Sisters, if your face is towards your God in rough weather. It is all wrong with you, Brothers and Sisters, if the weather is very calm and your face is turned away from your God.

5. *I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say unto me.* I am not sure that Job would know and understand all that God said. The Lord says a great deal, even to men like Job, that they do not easily understand, and it is not for us to require that God should explain everything to us. He gives not account of any of His matters. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me thus?" Our wisdom will be to plead with God our

suit for pardon and for mercy, and to ask Him to at least make us understand the way of salvation, that we may run in it and be at peace with Him.

6. *Will He plead against me with His great power!* "If I were to go to God and urge my suit with Him, would He crush me with the might of His majesty? Would He overwhelm me with His Omnipotence?"

6. *No, but He would put strength in me.* Such was Job's faith in God, that he was sure He would rather help him than hinder him—"He would put strength in me."

7, 8. *There the righteous might dispute with Him; so should I be delivered forever from my Judge. Behold, I go forward, but He is not there.* "I look to the future, I try to forecast the days that are yet to come, but I cannot see God there."

8. *And backward, but I cannot perceive Him.* "I remembered the days of old. I turned over the pages of my diary, but I could not find Him there." There are cases in which one who is a true child of God cannot, for a while, find his Father. Do not condemn yourself because you are in the dark! On the contrary, remember then that there are many who fear the Lord, yet who walk in darkness and have no Light. Let all such trust in the name of the Lord and stay themselves upon their God—and in due season the Light of God will come to them.

9. *On the left hand, where He does work, but I cannot behold Him: He hides Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him.* If this is the case with you, be thankful that you want to see your God. Let your very desires after Him, your anxiety because you miss Him and the sorrow of your spirit when you are, apparently, deserted by Him, encourage you to believe that you are one of His children! Another woman's child will not cry after you, dear mother—it is your own child that cries after you—and if you were not a child of God, you would not long and cry for the joy of His Presence. If you were not His child, that Presence would be no delight to you, it would be your dread.

10. *But He knows the way that I take.* Oh, what a mercy that is! "I cannot see Him, but He can see me. My grief has blinded my eyes with floods of tears, but nothing blinds His eyes. Like as a father pities his children, so does He pity me and regards me with the full observation of His gigantic mind—'He knows the way that I take.'"

10. *When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.* It is grand to be able to say that while you are in the fire! It is very easy to say it about another man who is in the furnace, but when you are in there, yourself, *then* to *say*, "I shall come forth as gold," is the sublimity of faith! It is a very simple matter to say, "If I were again put into the fire, I know I should come forth as gold." But it is when the burning heat is *melting* you, when you seem to be shriveled up in the crucible and so little of you is left—then is the time to say, "When the Lord has finished His work upon me, when He has thoroughly assayed me, I shall come forth as gold."

11. *My foot has held His steps, His way have I kept, and not declined.* You cannot talk like that in the time of trouble if you have not led a sincere, upright and gracious life. Those battles into which men come in the Valley of Humiliation are often brought about by their tripping when they are going down the hill. Our sins find us out at length, but if God enables us to walk uprightly, then we feel very confident—not in our own uprightness, but in God's love and Grace.

12, 13. *Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips. I have esteemed the Words of His mouth more than my necessary food. But He is in one mind and who can turn Him!* Job looks at His grief and says concerning it, "It is according to God's mind that I should have this grief, and who can turn Him?" There may be times when God wills that His servant should be in trouble. And when God lets down the iron bar, who can lift it up? When He shuts up a soul in Doubting Castle, how shall it escape until He wills its deliverance?

13-15. *And what His soul desires, even that He does, for He performs the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with Him. Therefore am I troubled at His Presence, when I consider if am afraid of Him.* Yet he longed for Him. So, sometimes, we long for the Presence of God, yet that Presence strikes us with a solemn awe whenever we are favored with it. We ask to see our Lord, yet when we do see Him, we have to say, with John, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." Or perhaps we are like Peter who, when the Lord Jesus was in his boat, fell down before Him and cried, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The majesty of Christ's pure Presence was too much for poor imperfect Peter—and so it is for us.

16, 17. *For God makes my head soft, and the Almighty troubles me because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither has He covered the darkness from my face.* Now you see where you might be if you had Job's experience. If you are not there, be very grateful. And if you are there, say, "There is a better man than I am who has been this way before me. I can see his footprints on the sands of time and I am encouraged by his example to trust my Lord in the darkest hour." You are not the only man or woman who has been in the coal cellar—there have been better than you in the dark places of the earth before now! Therefore, still have hope and be confident in God that in His own good time He will deliver you.

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

"RETURN! RETURN!"
NO. 2547

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 12, 1897,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 21, 1884.

"Return now every one from his evil way."
Jeremiah 18:11.

As I read the Scripture in your hearing, a few minutes ago, [See the Exposition at the end of the sermon. The verse referred to is Luke 13:3—The exposition was before the sermon.—EOD.] I was greatly startled by one word in the first part of the chapter—"Except you repent, you shall all *likewise* perish." How did those Galileans perish? I am solemnly afraid that some of you will perish just as they did. Christ says, "*likewise*," that is to say, in the same way as they perished, so will you, unless you repent. Well, how did they perish? Their blood was mingled with their sacrifices. Will it be, can it be—shall it be—that some of you will keep on coming to the House of Prayer—that you will continue to join in all the exercises of our public service and yet that you will not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, so that you will perish—and your blood will be mingled with your sacrifices? Think of it, dear Friends! Your blood on your Chapel attendance, your blood on your Church attendance—your blood on your hymn singing and on your prayers—because you have not yielded yourselves up to God, or obeyed the Word of His Gospel! If my blood must be spilt through an act of Divine vengeance, let it fall anywhere but on my religion, for that would seem a doubly dreadful thing—to die at the altar and to let one's blood be mingled with his sacrifice! Yet I do really fear that this must and will, in the necessary order of things, be the lot of some here who never forsake the gatherings of God's people and yet, at the same time, who have never yielded their hearts to God.

Then, think of those on whom the tower in Siloam fell—how did they die? Christ says, "Except you repent, you shall all *likewise* perish." Why, they were destroyed by their own defenses—the tower was built to defend the place—yet it fell upon 18 of the inhabitants and slew them! It is an awful thing when a man's self-righteousness damns him, when that which is his confidence becomes his condemnation, when the very thing in which he trusted shall totter to its fall and bury him beneath its ruins! That is the dread I have upon me, lest this calamity should happen to some of you, that your supposed tower of defense should prove to be your grave—and that you should find a sepulcher beneath your own confidences! Christ says it *shall* be so, "except you repent."

My text is all about repentance. It is an exhortation from God, very brief and sententious, but very earnest and plain—"Return now every one from his evil way." I want you all to notice that this is the call of *mercy*. God might have let you die to mingle your blood with your sacrifices. He might have let your tower fall upon you, to destroy you. Instead of that, the voice of Mercy still sounds in your ears—"As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn, turn from your evil ways; for why will you die?" And in the words of our text he says, "Return now every one from his evil way." God help you to listen to the call and to obey it! It is a message of mercy and it means that God would have you saved and, therefore, He cries to you, "Return," because He is willing to receive you and to blot out all your sin!

But remember that it is equally the call of a *holy* God, the God who knows that you cannot be saved unless you turn from your evil ways. A holy God will give no salvation to the man who continues in his unrighteousness. There is no Heaven for the man who will not leave his sin. You must quit your sin, or renounce all hope of salvation. You must turn or burn! You must repent or perish. God's unsullied holiness will never alter this Law—you must be driven from His face in the day of His wrath unless you turn from your evil way in the day of His mercy! Hope not that there shall be any exception made for you to this rule, for there shall not be. Within the gate of pearl, none who are defiled, or who would defile the holy place, shall ever enter. If you would be a partaker in the glories of Heaven, you must be washed, cleansed, sanctified. You must be made to hate your sin, or else you can never enter where God is. Listen, then, to this urgent but gracious message which I trust that God, in His mercy, has sent for many of you—"Return now every one from his evil way."

I. I want you to join me in looking at the words of my text as I try to press them home by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And, first, I will answer this question, WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY? It says, "*Return.*"

The picture is that of a man who is going the wrong way. He is trespassing, he is on forbidden ground, he is advancing in a dangerous road. And if he shall continue to go in that direction, he will, by-and-by, come to a dreadful precipice over which he will fall and there he will be ruined. A voice cries to him, "Return!" What does that word mean? It is very simple and that I may make it even more plain, perhaps, for practical purposes, let me say that the first thing such a man would do would be to *stop*. If I were out in the country, on a road which I did not know, and I heard a voice crying out to me, "Return," I would certainly stop and listen. And if I heard the cry repeated with great eagerness and earnestness, "Return! Return!" I would pause, look around and try to see who it was that had called to me. I would look in front to see whether there was any particular reason for bidding me return, but I would look all around about me to try and discover for what motive the man had bid me go

back. I wish that all of you who are wandering away from God would stop and consider where you are going. The trouble with some of you is that you will not *think*—you go blundering on, like some wild beast that cannot keep still. I beg you, just now, to stop a little while and think of what you have been doing, and to what your present course must lead, and in what woe it must end. Stop! In God's name, I would arrest you! As God's officer, I would put my hand on your shoulder and say to you, "You must stop! Pause and consider your ways. I cannot let you go on carelessly to your ruin, like a sheep into the slaughterhouse, or a bull going to be killed." Stop, I pray you!

Suppose a man *did* stop? That would not be *returning*—it is but the commencement of the return when a man stops, but it will be necessary for him, next, to *turn around*. The order for him to obey is, "Right about face." He must turn his face in the opposite direction from that in which he was traveling. I need not, perhaps, say much about what that opposite direction will necessarily be with some of you. If you are going on in sin, you know that your future direction must be the way of holiness. If you are trying to reach that refuge of lies—self-righteousness—the direction for you is, "Turn right around and look to Christ." If you are to be just the opposite of what you now are, your own conscience may be your instructor as to the particular road you are to take. When God says, "Return," it is plain that He means, "Turn your face in exactly the opposite direction from that to which it is now turned. Love what you now hate! Hate what you now love. Do what you have left undone. Leave undone what you have been accustomed to do." There must be a total, a radical change in you if you are really to obey the command, "Return." I think I hear you ask, "Who can effect this change?" And I am glad to hear that question, for I trust it will lead you to pray, "Turn me, O Lord, and I shall be turned!" May He, whose converting Grace can turn the sinner from the error of his ways, turn you, dear Friend, unto Himself!

There is something done towards returning when a man stops. There is still more done when he turns around, yet he does not actually return until, with persevering footsteps, the wanderer *hastens back to* him from whom he had departed. What God desires is that all His prodigal children should come home, that His stray sheep should be brought back to the fold, that the lost pieces of silver should be put into the treasury again. That, indeed, you who have wandered in sin should be as they are whom Christ has washed in His precious blood, whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated, and whom the Father has adopted and put among His children. Oh, that it might be so with you even now! I charge you, never be content until it is so. Give no rest to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, till you have obeyed that gracious summons, "Return," and have said to the Lord, "Behold, we come to You, for we know that it is Your love which has bid us return."

So much in answer to the question, "What does the text say?"

II. now I am going to dwell upon another word and ask a second question, WHEN ARE SINNERS TO RETURN? The text says, "Return *now* every one from his evil way."

I do not expect or wish to please you all by what I say. I should think my main purpose was defeated if I did. I want to carry out the unpleasant duty of pressing upon you that this return should be immediate. "Return *now*." Men are quite willing to promise to return when they have gone a little further—when, perhaps, they will have gone past all possibility of returning—but "*now*," is always an ugly word to them. "Tomorrow," they like much better. "Now," is a monosyllable which seems to burn into their bosom like a hot coal and, therefore, they pluck it out and throw it from them.

But listen to me, dear Friends! The voice of God bids you to return, now, and I would urge you to do so because *life is so uncertain* that if you do not return *now*, you may not live to return at all! I need not quote the many instances of men, apparently strong and healthy, who have suddenly been taken from us. I often note, as you must have done, that sickly persons are spared to us while the robust and vigorous are called away. I could quote instances where the husband lives who, I thought, would have gone long ago—and the wife who seemed the more healthy of the two—is dead and buried. But the sickly go, too, and go sometimes just when we thought they were recovering. There was great hope that they had outgrown the weakness, or that the disease would never return, but, in a moment, it leaped upon them, like a lion out of the thicket—and they were gone. He who would have his estate rightly ordered when he is dead should have his will made—everybody says that. And he who would have his *eternal* estate ordered aright should yield himself at once to the Sovereign will of the Most High, for life is uncertain.

Return *now*, *for the calls of Grace may not always come to you*. You sometimes hear a sermon which touches you and pricks your conscience, but, in a short time you may be removed where you will hear no such sermons, or where, though you hear them, they may no longer impress you. I am afraid my voice is so familiar to some of you unconverted ones that you are getting like the miller who can go to sleep, notwithstanding the click of the mill—no, who goes to sleep *better* in his mill than he does anywhere else! Or like some men I have heard of, over there in Southwark, who work inside the great boilers. When a poor fellow first begins to labor in such a place, the deafening noise is horrible—he thinks he must die! But, after a while, he gets so used to the reverberation that he could well-near sleep notwithstanding all the hammering. It is much the same with hearing the Word of God! Therefore I pray you, if you have long listened to one who would gladly do you good, yield to the message he delivers to you! Before you grow so familiar with it that it loses all its power over your heart, accept it as good tidings of great joy! God grant that you may do so now! While Grace calls, do not refuse.

Remember, also, that *your sin will be increased by delay.* The longer you stay away from God, the more deeply you will sin. If you keep on in the wrong path, not only will you have sinned the more, but that sin will have taken a more terrible hold upon you. Habits begin like cobwebs, but they end like chains of iron. A man might more readily have swept away the temptation when it was new to him than he will be able to do when, having yielded to it many a time, the devil has learned the way to master him. May God help you to flee from sin as soon as you perceive it, lest you be caught in its net of steel and be held in it to your *eternal destruction*!

Moreover, it is well for us to return unto our God, now, because the sooner we return to Him, the sooner we shall enjoy His favor and *the more delightful will our life become.* If to repent and to return to God involved a lifetime of misery, I would yet urge it, for it would be worth while to spend the remnant of our days in bitter grief and then to be eternally blessed—it would be worth while to give away the pleasure of time for the sake of the joys of eternity! But it is not so, for he who repents of sin loses nothing of joy when he loses sin, and he who finds God, finds Heaven! Peace with God makes even this life to be a blessed life and he who has it begins, even here, to enjoy the happinesses of the glorified! Come, then, dear Friends, you cannot too soon be happy and, therefore, you cannot too soon be holy. You cannot too soon be safe and, therefore, you cannot too soon return from the evil of your ways.

Do you not see, too, that God *will have the more service from you?* The sooner you are brought to Him, the longer will you have of life in which to serve Him. I always bless God that I was brought to Christ in my youth, for it left a good long time of life to be spent in the Lord's service. If any of you have gone past youth, into manhood and to middle age, or even to old age, then the word, "now," should come to you with a sharp, clear crack, as of a rifle! It comes like a staccato note in music, "Now! Now! Now!" It comes to you over and over again with a definite, imperious accent, "Now!" "RETURN NOW!" Why, my venerable Friend, you are already 70 years of age—I have put the number too low, for if you are spared to see another birthday, your next will find you 80—yet you are unsaved! God be merciful to you, aged sinner! Even now, may you return from your evil way!

Yet once more, return now, because, *if ever there is a reason for returning, that reason points to the present moment.* If there is a reason why you should repent before you die, that reason urges you to repent today! If it is reasonable that God should expect a man to leave his sin, it is reasonable that God should expect him to leave it *now.* If there is a hope that a man will leave his sin sometime or other, there must be a better hope that he will leave it *now* than that he will leave it in a year's time. Wisdom's voice cries, "NOW!" It is folly that says, "wait." Oh, that God Himself, by His own gracious Spirit, may *now* make you wise enough to turn

from your evil way and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that you may be saved!

III. Now may God help me, for a minute or two, while I try to answer this third question, WHO IS THE PERSON THAT IS TO RETURN? The text says, "Return now *every one* from his evil way."

"*Every one*." Many of you have returned, blessed be God for that! But every man, every woman, every child who has not returned should hear the voice of the Lord repeating this message, "Return now every one from his evil way." "Oh," you thought to yourself, "I wonder whether So-and-So will think of what is being said." Will you kindly forget him and think only about yourself? It would not be proper for me to point out individuals in this great crowd, but will you consider that I *do* point you out, one by one? The message of the text to each friend here who is unconverted is, "Return now *every one* from his evil way."

"Well," says one, "perhaps there will be some people converted through this sermon." Do not talk so, I pray you. Will *you* be converted through it? "You are the man," said the Prophet to David, and I would be just as personal in my address to every sinner here! I want *you,* my Friend, by Divine Grace to be turned from the error of your way. Why not? Some of you have been coming here a very long time. And there are some of you who are unhappy if you cannot come. You love the very *sound* of the Gospel and you are interested in everything which has to do with Christian work here. I cannot quite make you out, you are indeed strange people! I love you very much, but I cannot make out why you do not love your own souls better! You run about the house with the knives, the forks, the plates and the dishes, so that others may be fed, and yet you never eat anything yourself! I see you at the well and you are always ready, if you can, to turn the wheel and help to bring up the water for other people, but you never drink it yourself! What is wrong with you—some of you whom I might truly call loafers about this House of Prayer? I wish you would be real loafers, and eat of the Gospel loaf that is set on the table for all hungry sinners. Take a slice of it for yourselves this very hour!

But no, you like to be here, yet you are mere hangers-on. You take your turn in helping every good work, yet you do not give God your *hearts*. You must be fools to act in such a fashion! I do not want to say anything harsh or unkind, but that is exactly what you are! If you said that we were all wrong and laughed at our religion, I could understand you. You would be very wrong, but you would at least be consistent in it. You seem by your action to say that we are right—and yet not right! At least you seek to help us in our service, but you do not give yourself to the Lord. Why, you are, yourself, dying, and yet you run for the doctor for somebody else and all the while think yourself perfectly well! You are starving and yet you are eager to hand the bread out to the hungry—why do you not also take a bite yourself? O dear Hearts, what can be your hindrance in trusting the Savior? What is it that keeps some of you away

from Christ? I try to put the Gospel so plainly and simply that all may understand it. I have had it said to me, lately, I daresay a dozen times, by persons in spiritual trouble who have come many a mile to see me—yes, some of them from the very ends of the earth—"nobody has encouraged and helped us as you have by your sermons. You seemed as if you did not want to put any of us back, but as if you longed to bring us all to the Savior—and that is why we have come to see you."

Well, now, I think they would not have said that so often if it had not been true. I do not frighten you away from Christ. At least, I do not mean to do so, I would much rather beckon you to come to Him. It is not fear, I think, that has kept you back. What is it, then? Ah, perhaps we shall find out before we have done, for you are staked down somehow, and cannot escape. Possibly some of you are like the man we read of in the papers some time ago. He was walking by the seaside and stepped on a large chain and slipped his foot right through one of the links. When he tried to draw it back again, he could not, for he was held fast. The tide was coming in and there he was, a prisoner. He had to call long and loud before anybody came and by the time the people arrived, he had very much hurt his foot in endeavoring to extricate himself. He begged them to run for the smith, that he might come and break the iron. He came, but he brought the wrong tools with him so he could not accomplish the task. It would be some time before he could be back and, meanwhile, the tide had come in and the water was up to the man's feet, so he cried, "Run for the surgeon. Let him come and cut my leg off! It is the only hope of saving my life."

But by the time the surgeon came, the water was up to the man's neck, so the doctor could not get down to where his foot was fast in the iron chain. And there was nothing that could be done for him. There he was, poor fellow, and the tide rolled over him and he was drowned. Some of you seem to me to be just like that man, held fast by some invisible force. Yet when I try to get at the chain, I cannot find out what it is, it is so far under the water! Perhaps you do not know, yourself, what it is. I am going to make a dive to try to get at it as I ask my last question concerning the text.

IV. FROM WHAT ARE THESE PEOPLE TO RETURN? The text says—

"Return now every one from his evil way."

"From his evil way." Then each man has a way of his own—an evil way of his own—some *personal form of sin.* "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." Well now, my Friend, what is your evil way? If we can find that out, perhaps we shall learn why it is that you are not saved.

What is your own way? Is it *some constitutional sin* to which you are prone? There can be no doubt that we all have some infirmity, or weakness, or tendency to sin more fully developed in us than in other people. There is one man who is a fine fellow in many ways, but he is dreadfully impulsive and gets into furious tempers. He is soon cool, again, and he is

very sorry for what he has said and done, but there is not much good in that because if you scald anyone to death and *then* say that you are sorry, that does not bring him back to life! There are others whose tendency would be to the sins of the flesh, much more than is the case with a great many of their neighbors. Some are more inclined to pride and some to sloth, but there is something about the constitution of men, inherited from their parents, or brought on by their circumstances which leads each man towards some particular sin rather than to others. You know, dear Friends, what contrasts there are among men. There are some mean, stingy, cold-blooded fellows who would never become spendthrifts—it is a very great difficulty to extract even a sixpence from them. They could not be prodigals and spendthrifts, and there are others who never could be misers, except by a miracle, for they never could keep a penny in their pockets—it always burnt a hole through them, directly. These observations may help some of you to see whereabouts your own evil way may lie, according to the peculiarity of your constitution, circumstances and habits.

"Well," asks one, "what do you think is my evil way?" I will answer by putting another question to you, *What is the sin into which you most frequently fall?* I should think you can tell that—and that is the evil way from which you have most to fear. It is from that one way that you are especially called upon to return. What sin can you be most easily led into? Read the Bible through and you will find that one man was led into drunkenness, another into licentiousness, one man into anger, another into lying. Which has the greater power over you? Tonight, if you were tempted, to which temptation would you be most likely to yield? You do not know, you say. Well, then, let me put another question to you.

When do you get most angry if anybody rebukes you? If you are rebuked for a sin you did not commit, you need not get angry about that. You can calmly say, "My Friend, you have made a mistake." If you are chided for having done a thing of which you feel that you are perfectly innocent, you may even say, "Now, that is a lie." But yet you need not be very greatly provoked. But, oh, if we know your tender places and we begin just to hint at some of your private goings on—just lay bare a little of your secrets—yes, then you get furious, do you not? Now what is it about religion that you dislike most? What is it in the preaching that makes you say, "Well, I will never go to hear that man again! He curls my hair so short, he comes quite close to the skin"? Well now, that will help you to find out what is your own personal evil way—and it is from that way that you are to return.

Again, *what sin of yours eats up the other sins?* Look at a miser. He will not fall into licentiousness, because it is expensive and he cannot afford it. He is greedy for money, so he sins by covetousness, which is idolatry. He does not go and get drunk, for that is an expensive sin, and he thinks he cannot afford it. The love of money is his besetting sin. His covetousness is like Aaron's rod—it opens its mouth and swallows up all

the other sins. Here, on the other hand, is a man who is proud. He does not try to save money, for he spends it to flatter his pride. Everything must be in grand style for such a grand man as he is! You will not find him falling into drunkenness, or into the gross sins of certain other men because he is proud of being a respectable person. He has a character to keep up, so his pride swallows up all the other kinds of sin, and people call it, "a decent pride," "a respectable pride," "a proper pride." Yes, that is one kind of devil that kills some other devils! So far, it is a good thing to have devils killed, but if he kills them by swallowing them—it only makes him so much the worse!

Ah, look next at the man who is given to the sins of the flesh. You will not find that *he* is a miser! Poor wretch, he has not anything left that he can store up. I heard but yesterday of a man who was once in a good position of life, with a wife and children. I have known him as what is called a respectable man, worth several thousands of pounds. At the present moment, he is only earning a few shillings a week and I fear he will fall lower yet. He has had another house beside his own to maintain and a house that has swallowed up all his substance. He parted with his business for £500 and within a few weeks all that money was gone—and if it had been £50,000, it would have gone, for whoredom is a deep ditch that swallows a man, body and soul, fortune and everything! Mark my words, that man will die in the streets, one day, though he could have bought some of us up not so very long ago. That sin of his, you see, has swallowed everything up—it all disappears when he once goes that way. It is the same with gambling. When a man takes to the gaming table, it seems as if his whole soul runs out at that sluice and his entire life is just nothing to him. Wife, children, substance—all must go at the throw of the dice—or be staked on the running of a horse!

So, you see, dear Friends, you can find out which is your sin if you can discover what it is that swallows up all the others and becomes the master of your entire being. Where does your money mostly go? You could have told that Joseph was Jacob's favorite because he made him a coat of many colors. And there are some sins that wear the coat of many colors and often, as it were, it is dipped in the man's own blood, for everything goes for that particular sin.

I know that I am speaking to some such people. Turn, I beseech you, for before long you will be beggars if you do not. Turn from your sins, for before long you will be where hope can never come, where no messenger of mercy will invite you to return, but where the bell of eternity shall ring out its dreadful knell, "forever, forever, FOREVER!"—

"There are no acts of pardon passed
In the cold grave to which we hasten,
But darkness, death, and long despair
Reign in eternal silence there."

Therefore, "return now every one from his evil way."

But I have not hit on your sin yet, my Friend, have I? You have an evil way which you will not tell anyone. It is not as bad as any I have mentioned—it is a very respectable kind of evil way which you have. Your evil way is this, *the evil way of self-righteousness.* You do your very best. In fact, you think you do a little better than most people. You are not a Christian, but you are rather better than some Christians. In truth, you are so good a fellow that it is perfectly wonderful how the world bears up with such a good person as you are upon its surface! You utterly despise the evils I have been talking about and the people who commit them. You will not associate with them, nor say, "Good morrow," to them, you are so good. Ah, yes, but do you know where such "good" people as you are go? Not Heaven, mark you, for all those who are in Heaven have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And yours, according to your own account, do not need to be washed! The day will come, I assure you, when, if this has been your evil way, it shall turn out to be as destructive as the way of the worst transgressor, for self-righteousness is an open and gross insult to God! It makes out that the death of Christ was a superfluity! It tells God that He is wrong in charging a man with sin. It raises a clamor against God—it claims as a *right,* every good thing that God has to give—it does, in fact, uncrown the Savior, bid the Holy Spirit go His way as no longer needed, and throws the Gospel, which is the crown jewel of God, into the mud!

I wish that we were all agreed, by the power of the good Spirit, that we would turn unto our God with contrite hearts. Come, dear Friends, let us first acknowledge our sin. Come, let us trust in the Great Sacrifice. Come, let us lay our hand on Your dear head, O Christ, while we stand here and confess our sin. Come, let us ask the Holy Spirit to make us strong enough to forsake our sin. Let us ask Him to give us new hearts, and right spirits, that we may turn effectually from all sin and follow on to know the Lord. Children of God, pray for the whole congregation now! Let us pray—

"O Lord, turn us! Turn us and we shall be turned! And, if You *have* turned us, help us to persevere in righteousness, and let us not turn again to folly. But oh, turn men and women tonight, for Your love's sake—for Your mercy's sake—for Christ's sake! Turn the whole congregation of unsaved ones with their face to the Cross! And may they look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for their sin! And then may they look again unto Him and be lightened, as they see their sin effectually and eternally put away by the substitutionary Sacrifice of their redeeming God! Answer, O Christ, the cries of our soul, for Your own name's sake! Amen."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 13:1-22.

Verse 1. *There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.* It was a cruel and wicked act on the part of Pilate to wreak his vengeance upon the Galileans when they were occupied in offering the sacrifices of their religion.

2. *And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose you that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?* If men die violent deaths, if they perish in an accident, are they, therefore, to be accounted more guilty than the rest of mankind?

3-5. *I tell you, no, but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think you that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, No, but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.* Here, then, is a word of warning to those who have seen others die, all of a sudden, and who have wrapped themselves up in the robe of self-conceit, saying to themselves, "no doubt these people were much worse than we are. They have been taken away, but we still live." Take heed, Sirs, for God's justice is equal and unerring, and He will deal with you even as He has dealt with others! Our Lord next spoke a parable of warning to those who live in the midst of privileges, but who bring forth no fruit unto God. Let those to whom this parable belongs take note of the message it is intended to convey to them.

6, 7. *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. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I came seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbers it the ground?* "In the first year, it may have been a bad season. The second may have been the same, but for a tree to be fruitless for three years, to have so long a time of probation, and yet to bear no fruit, proves it to be worthless. If I had found even a little fruit on it, I would have been hopeful that more would come, by-and-by, but these three years I came seeking fruit on this fig tree, *and find none.* Surely, there never will be any. It has had every opportunity. There is no need of any longer delay—'cut it down; why cumbers it the ground?'"

8, 9. *And he answering said unto 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.* The vinedresser has much patience, but there is a limit to it. He will not willingly lose a tree, but only one more year is to be given to this cumberer of the vineyard. Who can tell but that, in the case of some who are here, that final year is coming to a close? Oh, that the Lord would cause the fruitless to become fruitful before the year ends!

Next, in the chapter, we have a word of comfort to those who have been under the dominion of sin for many a day and who are almost in despair. Here is one of Christ's Sabbath miracles.

10-17. *And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said unto her, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. And He laid His hands on her and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, and said unto the people, there are six days in which men ought to work: in them, therefore, come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath. The Lord then answered him, and said, you hypocrite, does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath? And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed.* So they will be again one of these days—all His present adversaries as well as all the old ones—those who deny His Deity, those who dispute His doctrines, those who refuse to yield obedience to His commands—those who know nothing of Him and who call themselves "agnostics." "All His adversaries were ashamed."

17. *And all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.* There is a very striking contrast between the two parts of this verse—"All His adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him." The next parable is full of comfort to those in whom there is at present little Grace, but, being a living seed, it will become more.

18-22. *Then said He, Unto what is the Kingdom of God like? And whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. And again He said, Whereunto shall I liken the Kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.* With His face toward the place where He should offer an Atonement for the sin of men, which was to be the climax of all His labors!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—509, 605, 368.

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

FOUR CONTRASTS
NO. 2548

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"But now thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel, fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life. But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel. You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense. You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices: but you have made Me to serve with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities. I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins."
Isaiah 43:1-4; 22-25.

Beloved Friends, there are many lights in which we can see sin. And our perception of sin very much depends upon the light in which we look at it. Sin is very terrible by the blaze of Sinai, when the mountain of Law and terrors is altogether on a smoke. It is a dreadful thing to look at sin when God speaks in thunder and all the earth trembles before Him. It is an awful thing to see sin by the light of your dying day. More terrible, still, will it be to see it by the light of the Judgment Day. When Abraham rose up early in the morning and looked towards Sodom, it was a lurid light that met his gaze as he saw the guilty cities blazing and smoking up towards Heaven like a vast furnace. To see sin in that light is a solemn thing. But of all the lights that ever fall upon sin, that which makes it, "like itself appear," is that which falls upon it when it is set in the light of God's Countenance. To see sin by the light of God's Love, to read its awful character by the light of the Cross—beholding Christ bleeding and dying—is the way to see sin. Nothing makes us feel sin to be so vile and guilty a thing as when we realize that it was perpetrated against the God of Infinite Love.

I am going to speak at this time mainly concerning God's own people. They are to be the direct object of my talk, and I want to set their sins in the light of God's Love to them. I mean, Beloved, your sins and my own. Let us set our sin in the light of God's eternal Love and if the sight should break us down, so much the better. If it should send us away humbled and ashamed, so much the better. And if it should make us praise eternal love beyond anything we have ever done before, so much the better. My one objective will be to set before you the contrast between God's action towards His people and His people's usual action towards Him. He is all Love, but I fear that some of us who love Him from the bottom of our hearts do not always show it in our lives—and we give much cause for Him to set our conduct in direct contrast to His own.

I pray, dear Brothers and Sisters, that your consciences may be wide awake while I am preaching, and that you will not so much listen to me as make heart-searching inquisition into your own spiritual state and your own behavior towards your God. I do not want so much to preach to you, as just to help you while you take the candle and the broom and sweep the house. There may be some piece of silver that you have lost which you will find very speedily by that process. It may be that you will learn to love the Savior better after you have thoroughly searched yourself and seen the contrast between His action towards you and yours towards Him.

I. The first contrast lies in THE CALL. Please open your Bibles at the first verse, and read with me—"I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name." Now read in the 22nd verse—"But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob."

We will begin by speaking of God's call to us. God has had much converse with those of us who are His people. We are not strangers to the sound of His voice and that method of communication from God came forth toward us even before we knew anything about it, for, first, *God called us out of nothing.* See how He begins this chapter—"Thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob." Our creation is entirely due to God. An ungodly man can hardly bless God for having made him, for his end may be terrible. But you and I can bless the day of our birth and praise the Lord that we ever were created to be His sons and His daughters and to enjoy so much, as we already do, of His infinite love and mercy. Blessed be God for our being, because it is followed by our well-being! Blessed be God for our first birth, because we have also experienced a second birth! We praise the Lord that it pleased Him to make us to be His people!

Our Lord has done more than make us, for He has educated us. He *has continued the fashioning of us.* We are still like the unfinished vessel in the potter's hands—the wheel is yet revolving and God's fingers are still at work upon us, molding and shaping us as He, Himself, would have us to be. "Thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel." Israel is the "formed" Jacob. By God's Grace, Jacob grows into Israel. Let us think for a minute of all the sweet experi-

ences of God's forming and fashioning touch that we have had. Sometimes it has been a rough stroke that was necessary for the molding of our clay. Only by affliction could we be made to assume the shape and pattern that the Lord had determined for us. At other times it has been the touch of very soft fingers. Divine love and kindness and tenderness have molded us. As David said to the Lord, in his Psalm of Thanksgiving, so can each true child of God say, "Your gentleness has made me great." "The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad." He has had wonderful dealings with us in creating us and in forming us!

Think what wonderful dealings He has had, next, in *consoling us,* for the Lord goes on to say, "fear not." Oh, how often He has cheered us up when our spirit was sinking! With the Psalmist, we have been able to say, "My flesh and my heart fails, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever." When it has been very dark with us, the Lord has lighted our candle. When we have been quite alone, then we have not been alone, for He has been with us. "A Syrian ready to perish," was a true description of Israel going down into Egypt, but the Lord did not leave him to perish—and He has not left us to perish, and He never will! Friends have sometimes failed to cheer us, but our Best of Friends has always comforted us. There are many who call themselves comforters, to whom we can truly say, "Miserable comforters are you all." But what a Comforter is the God of All Comfort! He knows how to comfort those that are cast down. He takes care that His comforts are given to us just as we need them and that they always come to us in the best possible way.

O Beloved, the Lord has had strange dealings with some of you which you could never tell! You could not even recount them to yourself in quiet soliloquy. You have lost, one after another, those who were dear to you, and yet you have not been permitted to sink down into despair. You have been brought into great straits, yet you have not been deserted by your God. You have been cast down, but not destroyed. You have gone through fire and through water, yet you have been brought out into a wealthy place and your soul has had to extol the Lord who has dealt with you in loving kindness and tender mercy!

So, you see, we have had from God the blessings of creation, formation, and consolation.

But that is not all, for the Lord has also called us and conversed with us in the matter of *redemption.* How sweetly it runs, "for I have redeemed you." Yes, blessed be God, whether we are poor, or sick, or obscure, we who believe in Jesus are bought with His precious blood! I would give up my eyes rather than give up that thought, "I am bought with the precious blood." I would give my hands, arms and every sense I have, sooner than give up that inward delightful confidence, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me. Upon the Cross of Calvary, when He was paying down His life-price, He gave Himself a ransom for me and I am a sharer in the effectual purchase of His redeeming blood." Beloved, has not the Lord also told you that, sometimes, in His Word and by His Spirit? Has he not made it

come home so blessedly to you that you have cried out with joy, "It is true, it is verily true, the Lord says to me, 'I have redeemed you'"? this is a choice way in which God has spoken to you, cheering and comforting your heart by a sense of His redeeming Love.

The Lord has done even more than that for each of His children. He has given a special *nomination*— "I have called you by your name." You know what your name was, once, but, blessed be God, He has given you a new name, and He has called you to Himself by name as much as Mary of Bethany was called, when her sister Martha said to her, "the Master is come and calls for you," or when Mary Magdalene turned herself and said, "Rabboni," because her beloved Master had called her by her name, "Mary." The Lord delights to call His people by their name, just as mothers and fathers do, but specially as mothers do when they repeat the child's pet name which they have given it—some fondling name which is the mother's own particular register and mark upon the child. "I have called you by your name." Then comes this blessed appropriation, "You are Mine." Dear child of God, your Heavenly father says to you, "You are Mine. You do not belong to the world, now, much less to the devil. You do not even belong to yourself. I have made you. I have formed you. I have consoled you. I have upheld you. I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name, you are Mine and I will never part with you."

This is the way that God talks to us! You recognize that Divine language, do you not? You have heard it many a time. You are, perhaps, hearing it now. Then turn with me to the other side of the question—the neglected call on our part. Listen again to this sad sentence from the 22nd verse. "But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob." That may not mean that there has been literally no calling upon God on your side, but it does mean that there has been too little of it. Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us put this matter to the test. What about *our prayers*? I have no wish to judge anybody, but I know that there are some who, I trust, do love the Lord, who have so little of the spirit of prayer that, broadly speaking, this accusation is true, "You have not called upon Me, O Jacob." Are there not some of you who spend only a very little time in secret prayer with God? Just a few hurried words in the morning, just a few more at night, when you are tired out and half asleep, but few, if any prayers all day long? Now, I consider brief, pious prayer to be the very best form of prayer. I do not think that length in prayer often ministers to strength in prayer, but those breathings of the soul's desire during the day—

"The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near."

That sigh, that "Ah!" "Oh!" "Would that!" "O God!"—that is the style of supplication which reaches the Throne of God! Yet are there not some of you who forget to present these brief prayers? Thus there is much less prayer than there ought to be, and the Lord has to say, "You have not called upon Me, O Jacob."

Some who do, I trust, love the Lord, are very lax about prayer with their Brothers and Sisters. I think that next to united praise, united prayer is the most delightful thing that can ever occupy the human mind. I believe that our Monday evening gatherings and our other Prayer Meetings are among the sweetest enjoyments that Christians can have this side of Heaven! Yet there are some who never come to them at all—and to them the Lord seems to address the language of the text, "You have not called upon Me, O Jacob."

True as this is of our prayers, I am sure that it is still more true of *our praise.* How little praise, my Brothers and Sisters, does the Lord get from us! Our "Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," we sing here, but how little of singing is there usually in our own houses! I will not blame you if you cannot sing vocally, but how little is there of that heart-music which is the very heart of music, that praising with the soul without any words, when we sit still and bless the Lord, and all that is within us magnifies His holy name! Is there not too little of this heart-music? The revenue of praise paid into the Divine exchequer is so sadly little that I am sure that the Master is robbed. We do not send in a fair estimate of our income of mercy and we do not pay unto the Lord that portion of praise that is due to Him and, therefore, He is obliged to say to us, "You have not called upon Me, O Jacob."

I will tell you what I think this sentence further means, and that is that there are many with whom God has dealt well, who do not venture to call upon Him for *special help in His service.* They keep plodding along the old roads and mostly in the old ruts, but they do not dare to invoke the aid of the Lord for some novel form of service, some fresh enterprise upon which they can strike out for God. It has been my lot, in years past, to call upon God to help me in what men judged to be rash and imprudent enterprises, but oh, how grandly the Lord always answers to the holy courage of His people if they will but do and dare for Him! Yet, too often, He has to say, "You have not called upon Me, O Jacob."

I wish we would put God to the test and see what He is both able and willing to do for us and by us. There are the promises, but they are often like locked-up boxes. They lie like that mass of coin which the German Emperor is said to be storing up in a fortress—keeping it all idle and useless—to come in handy, I suppose, one day, for blood and iron. But, meanwhile, it is doing no service to anybody. Let us not keep God's mercies locked up after that fashion, but let us utilize them wherever we can!

I am also afraid that sometimes, *in our trouble,* we do not call upon God as we should. I may be addressing a Christian here who is in deep trouble and who has, in vain, tried 50 ways of getting out of it, but he has not yet tried what calling upon God would do. They have in Jersey, as you may know, the habit, when they think they are being wronged, of calling, "Ha! Ro! Ha! Ro! Ha! Ro!" and straightway, having called upon the prince, according to the feudal custom, to come to their defense, all action must be stopped, for the prince is supposed to intervene to take up

the quarrel of his subjects. And it is always a wise thing, when you are getting into the deep waters of trouble, not to battle, worry, and fret, but just to say, "O God, my God, I do invoke You! I put this case into Your hands. This man has slandered me, but I will never answer him. You shall answer for me, O God! I am being wronged, but I shall not go to law. I will bear this burden, O God, until You, who are the Judge of the oppressed, shall see fit to right me!" Whenever Christian men can act like this in time of trouble, or in time of service, then they do well. But the Lord still has to say to many of His people, "I have been speaking to you in love, and mercy, and tenderness, but you have not called upon Me." If this accusation touches the heart of any Believer, here, let him pray for forgiveness and begin, from this time on, to call upon the name of the Lord.

II. Now, secondly and more briefly, let us consider another contrast which is equally striking—upon the matter of THE CONVERSATION between the Lord and His people.

Notice, first, God's side of it, as it is given in the second verse—"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you, for I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." Now read the other side, in the 22nd verse—"But you have been weary of Me, O Israel." Notice how God is with His people *in strange places.* Wherever they are, He will not leave them. He will go right through the waters with them. God also keeps close to His people *in dangerous places,* fatal places as they seem—"When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." There is God keeping pace with His people through fire and through water, never leaving them, but always making this cheering message to be the comfort of each one of them, "I am with you! I am with you! I am with you!" Our faithful God always keeps close to His people. Is it not perfectly wonderful how close Christ has kept to His Church? Even when she had sinned, He would not leave her. When she had fallen and was ready to perish, He would not desert her—

"'Yes,' says the Lord, 'with her I'll go
Through all the depths of sin and woe!
And on the Cross will even dare
The bitter pangs of death to share.'"

He cannot be separated from His people—to every one of them He has given the personal promise, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

Now listen to your side of this matter of conversation with God—"But you have been weary of Me, O Israel." Has it not been so with regard to *private prayer?* A very little of that is quite enough for you, for you soon get tired of it! You actually went to sleep, the other night, in the middle of your prayers. Was it not so? Well, I am not going to blame you too much, but it is truly sad if this is the case with you.

Is it not the same, often, with your *reading of the Scriptures?* When you have taken your Bible to read a portion, have you not had to school yourself to do it? It has been quite a task for you. Did you ever hear how Hone, the author of *The Every Day Book,* who had been an infidel, was brought to the Savior's feet? He was in Wales, one day. He never read the Bible, or thought of God, but he saw a girl, sitting at a cottage door, reading her Bible. He said, "Oh, the Bible?" "Yes, Sir," she answered, "it is the Bible." He said, "I suppose you are getting your task." "Task?" she enquired. "Task?" "Yes, my dear, I suppose your mother has set you so much to read." "Mother set me so much to read?" "Yes," he replied, "I suppose you would not read the Bible, otherwise. It is a task, is it not?" "Task?" she said, "Oh, no! I only wish I could read it all day long. It is my joy and my delight, when my work is done, to get a few minutes to read this precious Book." That simple testimony was the means of converting the infidel and of bringing him to trust the Savior for himself! I am afraid that there are many who could not have said what that girl did, for they have been weary of God's Word and weary of God, Himself!

When they have come up to God's House, they have been weary of *hearing the Word.* Look at many, many, many professors. I trust that they are God's children—but, oh, they like very short sermons—and if they do attend to what the preacher says, he has to be very careful to put in plenty of illustrations and striking sayings. *Then* they will listen, but if he does not preach so as to please them, they say, "Well, you know, it was very warm, and I could not help just dropping off into a doze." Yes, I know. I know. "He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep," but poor Israel, himself, often sleeps, to his own serious loss! And the Lord has to say to him, "You have been weary of Me, O Israel."

Are there not some, also, whom God loves, who get *weary of their work?* They used to be Sunday school teachers, but, you see, they now live out in the country, and they need the Sabbath day's quiet, so they cannot teach any longer. They used to preach at the corner of the street, or in a room somewhere, or do anything that they could for Christ, but they are getting old, they say, and so they must just do a little less. They used to give generously to the cause of God, but their means are reduced, and they are obliged to draw in—so they draw in first in the matter of giving to God! They begin to pinch God's cause before they pinch themselves! So the Lord has, again, to say, "You have been weary of Me, O Israel." Possibly, there are some things in which each one of us has failed to take that delight in God which we ought to have taken. We have not been half so delighted with God as He has been with us. And we have not been so willing to converse with Him as He has been willing to go with us through the floods and through the flames.

III. Now, next, and very briefly, indeed, I want you to notice the contrast in THE SACRIFICE. Turn to the third verse—"I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you." Now read in the 23rd verse—"You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither

have you honored Me with your sacrifices. You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices: but you have made Me to serve with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities."

Here is God giving up everybody else for the sake of His people! Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba were great nations, but *God did not choose the greatest.* Is it not an extraordinary thing that the Lord should ever have loved some of us? We are nothing in particular and there are mighty men, learned men, men of rank and station, yet He has passed them by. "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; 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." That is a very wonderful declaration on God's part—"I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you." That is to say, "I passed others by, and chose you."

We may see another meaning in these words, for *God has given us His choicest Gift.* Christ is infinitely more precious than Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba, though they were lands of great abundance of wealth. God had but one Son, yet He gave Him up that He might die for us and that, through His death, we might live! There can be no gift equal to this, for that Son of God was God's own Self—and in the death of Christ, it was God Himself who came to earth for our redemption! Will you just try, dear child of God, to think over that great fact, for you know that it is true!

Now look at the other side. Will any of you to whom this applies, remember the charge God here makes? "You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings." I wonder how little some people really give to God! I believe, in some cases, not as much as it costs them for the blacking of their boots. If you were to set it all down, there are some professors whose sacrifice to God might be put—I was about to say, in their eyes—but certainly they would not feel it if it were put in their mouths, for it is so little. "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you; yet you have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings."

Then the Lord adds, "You have bought Me no sweet cane with money." Not even the smallest offering has been given to the Most High by some who profess to have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ! How little is given by the most generous of us! How little, even, by those who live nearest to God! As if His Words ought to touch our consciences, the Lord says, "I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense"—as much as to say, "I have left it entirely up to you what you would bring. I have not demanded *anything*, I have not fixed any rate, I have not taxed you. And this voluntary principle—has it

failed? I have not put you under the Law and said that you shall give just so much—I have left it wholly to your love."

I read somewhere that in the Roman Catholic times, men were very generous because they thought that they could purchase salvation by their alms and their gifts to the church. And it is said that the doctrine of Free Grace makes people stingy! I do not believe that it is so—I believe that the natural effect of Grace upon any true heart is to make the man feel that if God has done so much for him, it is his joy and his delight to do all that lies in his power for God and His cause. At any rate, dear Friends, let us be sure to make it so in our case. I am not going to press this matter upon you, but I want you to take it home to yourselves, as I take it home to myself. Let not the Lord have to say to any one of us, "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you...but you have bought Me no sweet cane with money."

IV. I close with one more contrast, which refers to THE HONOR given *by* God and the honor given *to* God.

Read with me in verse four—"Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you." Then here is the contrast, in the 23rd verse—"neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices." The words seem to answer to each other in the declaration of God's love to His people and in His lamentation for the lack of their love to Him! "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable." This is a very wonderful passage and it is blessedly true that *God gives great honor to those whom He saves.* I have known persons who, before their conversion, were unclean in their lives—men who had been everything that was despicable and women who had lost all honor—and when they have been converted, they have joined a Christian Church and, in the society of God's people, they have become honorable! They have been taken into the fellowship of the saints just as if there had never been a fault in their lives! Nobody has mentioned the past to them—it has been forgotten. If ever any professed Christian has spoken of it, it has been a disgrace to him to do so, but in the Church of God in general, we take in those who have been the vilest of the vile. And if they have but new hearts and right spirits, they are our Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and they are honorable among us, and the Lord says to each one of them, "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable."

All God's people are honorable people, they are the true "right honorables," for God has made them so! They are honorable as to their new nature, for that is holy and they seek after holiness. They are honorable as the sons of God, for they are of the blood royal of Heaven. They are honorable as wedded to Christ, for He becomes their Husband. They are honorable because of their inheritance, for they can sing—

"This world is ours, and worlds to come!
Earth is our lodge and Heaven our home."

They are honorable as to their station throughout eternity, for they shall dwell forever at the right hand of God. Even those who were once so dis-

honorable that we could not have associated with them, then, are brought near by the blood of Christ and God makes them honorable.

I think that if you and I, poor creatures that we are, are made honorable by God, the very least thing we can do is to honor Him in return. This is the highest honor that God can put upon us, that He fixes His love upon us—"You have been honorable, and I have loved you." Drink in that nectar if you can. I cannot preach about it. I always feel as if, when I get to that theme, I must just sit down and think over this great wonder, that God loves me! "I have loved you—I, the Great, the Infinite Jehovah, have loved you!" Well, then, the very least thing we can do is to honor with our whole heart and soul Him who has so greatly honored us!

Now, Beloved, have you honored God? He says in our text, "Neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices." Have you honored God by your lives, dear Brothers and Sisters? Have you honored God by your confidence in Him? Have you honored God by your patience? Have you honored God by defending His Truth when it has been assailed? Have you honored God by speaking to poor sinners about Him? Are you trying every day to honor Him? Surely, it is the very least thing we can do who have been—

"Chosen of Him before time began,"

and then redeemed with the heart's blood of the Son of the Highest. It is the least we can do, to make every faculty we possess subordinate to this end of honoring and glorifying God! It is for this He has created us, for this He has called us, for this He has redeemed us, for this He has sanctified us! Therefore let us set about it at once and think and plan within our hearts what we can do for the glory and honor of Him who has redeemed us unto Himself. The Lord bless this message to all here present, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 43:1-7; 21-28; 44:1-5.

Isaiah 43:1. *But now thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel, fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine.* "Fear not," is a command of God and is a command which brings its own power of performance with it. God, who created and formed us, says to us, "fear not," and a secret whisper is heard in the heart by which that heart is so comforted that fear is driven away. "Fear not: for I have redeemed you." That is a good reason why we should never fear again! Redemption is a well of consolation and the redeemed of the Lord have nothing whatever to fear.

2. *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.* The godly have the best company in the worst places in which their lot is cast.

2. *And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.* The godly have special help in their times of deepest trouble.

2. *When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned.* The godly are the subjects of miracles of mercy in seasons of greatest distress.

2. *Neither shall the flame kindle upon you.* You shall come out of the furnace as the three holy children did, with not so much as the smell of fire upon you, for, where God is, all is safe. "You shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you."

3. *For I am the Lord your God.* This is the grandest possible reason for not fearing! Fall back upon this when you have nothing else upon which to rely. If you have no goods, you have a God. If your gourd is withered, your God is still the same as He ever was—"For I am Jehovah, your God."

3, 4. *The Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life.* All that God has given, if it were not enough, He would still add to it. He has redeemed us, so there is no need of more, but if there were, God would go through with it even to the end.

5. *Fear not: for I am with you.* This is the second time that the blessed words, "fear not," ring out like the notes of the silver trumpet proclaiming the jubilee to poor trembling hearts! "Fear not, for I am with you." The Lord seems to say to each troubled Believer, "My honor is pledged to secure your safety, all My attributes are engaged on your behalf right to the end. Yes, I am, Myself, with you. Therefore, fear not."

5-7. *I will bring your seed from the east, and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by My name.* Whatever happens, God will be with His Church. His own chosen people shall all be gathered in. There shall be no frustration of the Divine purpose. From east or west, north or south, all His sons and daughters shall come unto Him, even every one that is called by His name.

7. *For I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yes, I have made him.* And God will be glorified in His people; the object of their creation is the glory of their God and that end shall, somehow or other, be answered in the Lord's good time. Now I want you to notice the other side of the question. God says, in the 21st verse—

21. *This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise. But.*—A sorrowful, "but." And the strain sinks from a triumphant shout to a doleful lamentation. "But"—

22. *You have not called upon Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel.* How sad it is that those who have been loved so much should make such a shameful return for it all!

23. *You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings.* No kids of the goats, or lambs from the fold.

23. *Neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense.* "I

have not been a cruel taskmaster, or tyrant, demanding of you more than you could give."

24. *You have bought Me no sweet cane with money.* "No calamus has sent forth its perfume from My altar."

24. *Neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices: but you have made Me to serve with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities.* These are the people whom God had loved so long and so well, those upon whom He had set His unchanging affection! Yet they acted shamefully. What will follow upon such conduct as this? Their swift destruction? No! Listen to the Lord's gracious message.

25. *I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.* Here is a great wave of mercy washing away everything that could bear witness against the people of God!

26-28. *Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare you, that you may be justified. Your first father has sinned, and your teachers have transgressed against Me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.*

Isaiah 44:1-5. *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: thus says the Lord that made you, and formed you from the womb, which will help you; fear not, O Jacob, My servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob. And another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.* There are different ways of making the same profession of attachment to the Lord. All do not acknowledge in the same way their faith in God, but it is a great blessing when our offspring acknowledge it. Let us end our reading with that sweet blessing upon our children—"I will pour My spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring. May it come to pass in all our families, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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"Therefore since Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves, likewise, with the same mind: for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have worked the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, drinking parties and abominable idolatries."
1 Peter 4:1-3.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has suffered for sin and He has suffered to the utmost extent, for He has paid the death penalty on His people's behalf. Look at the 18th verse of the previous chapter—"For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." Christ has fought with sin to the bitter end. He has now done with sin, for He has died to it. He has borne the capital sentence pronounced upon the guilty, dying, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Now, as many as have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ are one with Him. And what He did, He did representatively for them, so that they virtually did it in Him. Therefore, every Believer ought to regard Himself as having been put to death on account of sin—as having undergone, in the Person of His Great Substitute, the capital sentence on account of sin and now, as a man who has been executed is clear of the guilt, so are we! And as a man who has been executed should not return, could he live again, under the old sin, so neither must we. "Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God. Likewise reckon you, also, yourselves, to be dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Now read between the lines of our text. In Christ we have died unto sin once, but now that we live unto God, we are as if we had actually died to sin and had passed into a new state and condition by virtue of our union with Jesus Christ our Lord. But while this is true, there is an experience of it which we have to undergo within our own spirits—hence the Apostle says, "Therefore since Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves, likewise, with the same mind." As He has died to sin, we are to die to sin, also. This takes place—the commencement of it, at any rate—at the time of conversion. The man who formerly loved sin begins to hate it. The sin which he used to swallow greedily, he now loathes and shuns. There is such a change worked by the Spirit of God in the heart of

the Believer that sin can no more have dominion over him. It is dethroned from the place which it occupied over his nature. It once put its foot upon his neck, but now he puts his foot upon its neck. He is dead to sin and he ceases from it—not only that—in the sight of the all-seeing Jehovah, he has his infirmities, his failures and his sins, but still, as far as his heart is concerned, he has done with it.

There is not any sin which he would willingly do. There is no sin which he wishes to spare. "Destroy them all," he says, "There is not one of them which is not a deadly viper which would cause my ruin. Sweep them all out, my happiness can never be complete till my character is perfect! O Lord, I can never have my heart's desire till—

'The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol is shall be once
And forever torn from off Your throne,
That I may worship only You.'"

You see, dear Friends, what a wonderful change it is, that is worked in those who are united to the Lord Jesus Christ. (It is as though a man were made to be dead to all for which he once lived and were made to live for that to which he was before dead). He has passed from death unto life, from loving evil into loving righteousness, from hating that which is good to the following after it with all his heart and soul and spirit! I am not going to enlarge upon that great Truth of God except to say this. I beg you to remember that there is no quitting of sin—there is no escaping from its power—except by contact and union with the Lord Jesus Christ. I may stand here and preach against the prevalent vices of the age, as I hope I never shall be ashamed to do, but no vice will be put down merely by my denunciation of it. I may charge this man to shake off his sins by righteousness and to escape for his life, but I have set him a task which is quite impossible to him unless I also tell him *where the power is to be found by which this work is to be done.*

You will not bring a man into the humor to break off his sin by merely telling him that it is his duty, or by warning him that he will be ruined unless he does so. No, but if you can lay that dead man at the foot of the Cross—if you can bring the pierced hands of Jesus to touch that dead and powerless sinner—then he will live! If he does but look to Christ, a glance at Him will give that moral and spiritual power which shall enable the man to make a total alteration in his life, because inwardly there shall be made, by the Holy Spirit, a complete transformation in his inner self. You may take a lantern which has no candle in it and you may clean the exterior as long as you like, but it will not guide you through the darkness. There must be a candle placed within, or else it will be useless to you, cleanse it as you may! And within man's secret nature there must be put the Divine candle of *faith in Christ,* otherwise all his outward moralities will leave him a dark lantern. You may take a sow from the trough and you may wash it with much soap and expend much toil upon it—but whatever you may do, as soon as it is set free—the creature will go back to its wallowing and be as filthy as the rest of the swine. It can never be cleanly, like the sheep, unless an Almighty hand shall transform the sow into a sheep and, in like manner, sinners are never really changed until they are born again!

It is a good thing for the sow to be washed, I have no doubt it is all the better for it. It is a good thing for the lantern to be cleaned though it has no candle—it is all the better for it. And so, it is a good thing for the drunk to become a total abstainer. It is a right thing for the thief to become honest. It is a wise thing for the impure to become chaste. All these things are good, but, still, they fall short of what is needed to enable a man to enter Heaven. And there comes down, again, this great Nasmyth hammer which, at every blow, crushes all self-righteousness! "You must—you must—you must be born again! There is no escaping from the bondage of sin except by that wonderful means which God has ordained—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." There is no way of getting the power with which we can kill sin, the great adversary of our souls, except by laying hold upon the conquering Cross of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior!

That is the great Truth of God I shall try to enforce all through my discourse, but I intend just to light up portions of my text as I have sometimes seen, at illuminations, a few oil lamps lit up, and not the rest. I am going to select a few words here and there, and to try to illuminate them by the light of the Holy Spirit.

I. The first words I want to light up are but two—"NO LONGER." "That he *no longer* should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

Those words, "no longer," strike me as exceedingly suggestive to some of you. If God the Holy Spirit shall open your eyes to see Jesus Christ as having died for you—and you shall look to Him and find life in that look—then you will "no longer" be what you are! You will "no longer" wish to do what you have been doing. You will not even ask for an hour's furlough or respite, but this will be your cry, "No longer! No longer would I spend my time in the flesh to the lusts of men." It is near the end of the year, the last Sabbath evening in another year. My Heart, have you been living to please yourself and have your own passions been your master? Then, O my God, help me to say that it shall be so no longer!

For, first, *it is a dishonorable thing* for a man to let his body, which is his baser part, rule his spirit, which is his nobler part. It is a disgraceful thing for a man to live only for the pleasures of the day and never cast a glance into the future and think about his immortal soul which will outlive the stars. Say to yourself, "Why should I act so dishonorably? Come, my spirit, wake yourself up!" If you are, indeed, a man with intellect and soul within you, let your spirit take its right position and say to the body, "You shall no longer rule, but you shall be a drawer of wood and a drawer of water to my mind and my spirit, which shall henceforth come to the front, for no longer will I seek after the lusts of the flesh."

And for this reason, also, because it is not only dishonorable, but *it is wrong "to* live in the flesh to the lusts of men." Are you not conscious, you who have never lived unto God, that you are living altogether a wrong kind of life? I do not mean, necessarily, that you are leading a vicious life, but is your Maker, your Creator, getting glory out of you, or does this complaint of God apply to your case—"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought

up children and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel does not know, My people do not consider." Have I not often put it to you that you would not keep a dog if it never followed at your heel? You would not care to have an engine that never worked according to your will. You would soon say, "I must get rid of this useless thing." Yet here is God who has created you and provided for you—and preserved you in being—and all this while you have scarcely thought of Him! You have never loved Him, you have never truly worshipped Him and, whatever kind of outward homage you have rendered to Him, you have had no real delight in it. You have been a trembling slave, but you have never been an obedient servant to Him! Well, then, as this is all wrong, we must alter it! A man who is a man says, "If this course is wrong, I am going no further in it. If this is a dishonest thing, I will have no more to do with it. No longer! No longer! No, not a moment longer will I continue as I have been! If I can have an alteration made, that alteration shall be made at once, for this is my motto, 'no longer.'"

Let me also say to you, dear Friend, that you ought "no longer" to live "in the flesh to the lusts of men" because t*he tendency is for you to get hardened in that evil state.* Remember that text on which I spoke to you, a fortnight ago? [Sermon #1821, Volume 31—*Cords and Cart Ropes*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin, as it were, with a cart rope." As cords of vanity grow into cart ropes, so little evil practices consolidate into dreadful habits which hold a man as with bands of steel! There are some of you who, if you mean to go to Heaven, must begin at once! I feel that there are some here to whom God seems to say, "now, or never!" I can hear the great pendulum of the clock of time and as it goes to and fro it says, "Now, or never! Now, or never! Now, or never!" Before, like Lot's wife, you stiffen into a pillar of salt that can never move, I charge you, escape for your life! Run to the only refuge set before you! May God help you to do so, looking unto Jesus! Let the words, "no longer," enter into your heart as they now come forth from my mouth!

"No longer," for if, dear Friend, you have found out that Jesus has loved you, and that He gave Himself for you, you will say to yourself, "*No longer will I harbor His enemies.*" I pray the Holy Spirit to help me to lead you right away to Calvary where Jesus hangs bleeding on the Cross. Will you not sit down with me upon the ground and look up, and see Him die? Mark the precious blood flowing from His many wounds and hear Him cry, "I thirst." "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Look unto Him! Oh, that you would look, as I now do! I am looking unto Jesus and trusting myself entirely with Him to save me. And I feel in my heart that He *has* saved me. Now I cannot live as I once lived. I cannot sin as I once sinned. I must have done with sin if I have, indeed, trusted in Christ. Do you not feel the same? I am sure that if you do, now, look to Him, and live by Him, you will not want to have your sins spared you even until the end of this year but you will say, "No! Take them out! Hang them up! Let them all be put away forever. There is no darling sin that I would keep back. Let them all die, for no longer would I seek to find a

perilous and poisonous enjoyment in them, but my delight shall consist in seeking to be holy and in endeavoring to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ." If you have received the new life into your soul, then I know that you will say, "No longer will I abide in sin." I have been charmed, this week, by some whom I have seen who have found the Savior just lately. And I am pleased to find that the Lord is at work in many ways bringing sinners to Himself. Why should He not bring you? And what better time could there be than just at the close of this year?

Remember that *it must be short work with every sin.* Your watchword must be, "NO LONGER!" There must be no parleying, no trifling. You have already parleyed too long and trifled too long. Now for the one deadly shot that shall penetrate the very heart of sin-love and make it fall slain within you. *It will have to be sharp work* with some of you, as well as short work. It will be like cutting off your right arm or tearing out your right eye, but it must be done! It must be with you as it was with John Bunyan, "Will you have your sins and go to Hell? Or will you give them up and go to Heaven?" There is no other alternative. As God lives, it must be one of these two! As it is short work and sharp work, *it will be saving work,* for, when you have parted with your sins, you will be joined to Christ! And when at Christ's feet you have laid down your love of sin, then you may go your way hearing the Apostle's comforting message, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Trusting in Christ, you are saved, and you may sing of it, and bless the name of the Most High!

So much for these two words, "no longer."

II. Now I want you kindly to turn to my text, again, that I may light up five words in the second verse. They are these, "THE REST OF HIS TIME."

"The rest of his time." I do not know how much there may be, but, *in any case, it cannot be very long.* "The rest of his time," cannot be very long even with the longest-lived among us. Some have good constitutions and they are yet only in the beginning of their days, so they may live a considerable long time. Still, they cannot be sure that it will be so. God has been visiting this congregation very frequently of late. Every day, almost, somebody is taken away from us. Elderly persons have gone in immense numbers during the last two months. Some of our young friends are also going and we shall have to carry to the grave, this week, some who have scarcely reached middle life. The hand of God is at work among us in a very marked manner, taking away one and another from our midst. "Who'll be next? Who'll be next?" One who was here on Sabbath week has now gone into the world of spirits—I know of one—there may be many more besides. Well, then, dear Friends, it is clear that the rest of our time cannot be very long.

"The rest of his time." *With some, it must be very short—persons* who are very sickly. Others who are very aged. And to some who are neither sickly nor aged, the bolt of death shall be let fly in a moment and they will be in the unseen world. Come, then, dear Friends, let us think this matter over! I would like to think it over myself. There is this consideration which we must not forget—while we are *talking* about the rest of our

life—it is already going. Every moment that we are here, we are traveling at an immense rate, speeding onward to the great goal of death. We had need be in earnest, for while we are making up our minds to be earnest, our time is slipping away! We say that we will find a firm foundation to build on for eternity and while we are thinking and talking of the foundation, the earth is crumbling from underneath our feet and we are gradually gliding away! "It is time to live," said Anacreon, "for I grow old." And surely we may each one of us say, "It is time to live, since, whether old or not, my life is continually passing away."

I should like to cheer up some of you who are not yet converted. With the belief that although the rest of your time for serving the Lord cannot be as long as it would have been if you had been converted earlier, yet, if you yield yourself to Christ at once, there may be *enough time left to you to do good work for your Lord and Master.* I have known an aged man converted to Christ long after gray hairs have been upon him, even when tottering to his grave. He has not been wholly useless—he has still brought forth fruit in his old age to show that the Lord is upright. It has been the happy lot of some of us to be working for our Lord and Master ever since our boyhood, but we have not yet done enough. We feel, indeed, hungry to do much more, and we have the satisfaction of hoping that we may be spared, to do in the future, more than we have ever done up to the present. Who knows? God may give us fresh health and strength and we may be enabled to accomplish more than in the past—we shall do so if it pleases Him. But if any of you are converted in your old age, if you are brought to Christ at a period when your years must be few, yet take care to redeem the time, because the days are evil. It is wonderful how God can use even *you*—there is a testimony for you to bear—bear it and may God bless it very abundantly!

Meanwhile, as for the rest of our life, *it has immediate demands,* and I beg to impress that thought upon everybody here. The way to do a great deal is to keep on doing a little. The way to do nothing at all is to be continually resolving that you will do everything. Let that grand dream of yours, "baseless fabric of a vision" as it is, go where dreams must go. And begin to do the day's work in the day, yes, and tonight's work—the work of the hour upon which we have entered—do that while the hour is here. I am sure that there are many of you professing Christian people who do not bring anybody to Christ because, although you know how it ought to be done, you keep on finding fault with those that do it. Now, just leave your fellow servants alone and get to your own work. "Oh," you say, "there is a person who is constantly trying to speak to others. He is really quite intrusive." Yes, I know him very well, but, instead of bothering your head about *him*, would it not be as well for you to do the work better, yourself, if you can? If you tried to do so, you would then not have any inclination to find any fault with your fellow servant. If we were all determined to do what we could and to do it well, we should serve the Lord acceptably and be blessed in doing it.

"When I get home," says someone, "I know what I can do. I am a nursemaid and I shall hear the children say their prayers." Yes, hear them say their little prayers, but be sure to tell them something about

"Gentle Jesus." "Oh, but," says another, "I have such a number of children around me that I hardly ever get out. It is only now and then, on a Sunday evening, that I can come here. It seems as if there is nothing that I can do for Jesus." "My dear good soul, you are the very person who has much to do for Christ! You have a great and precious charge entrusted to you—seek to bring all those dear children to the Savior." "Well," says another, "I really do not know what I can do." Now, for a person who lives in London to say that is really wicked! You know what Solomon says about our work, "Whatever your *hand* finds to do, do it with all your might." I should have thought that he would have said, "Whatever your eyes can see that needs to be done." No, he seems to say, "You may shut your eyes and put out your hand and do the first thing that comes within your reach." In such a city as this, there is so much to be done that you may just put out your hand and do the first thing that comes within your reach—that is the best thing for you to do!

"The rest of his time." I have tried to light up those words and I want every Christian and every unconverted person, also, to go away thinking in some such fashion as this, "the rest of my time—let me use it, Lord, for You. Let me work at double-quick speed. Lord, help me to make forced marches for You. Lord, help me to do thoroughly what I do. Enable me to throw my whole soul into it and, by Your Divine Spirit, so inspire me, so fill me with Your own power and Grace, that what I do may be done effectually and efficiently." Know you not that you are laborers together with God, and that what you do aright, God does through you? If you can but realize this, how honorably and gloriously will the rest of your life be spent!

III. Now, to close, I would throw the lamp-light on six words in the third verse. The words are these—"THE TIME PAST OF OUR LIFE."

"The time past of our life." Well, *that has gone past recall.* Oh, if you could only get your life back, again! But you cannot—not even a *moment* of it. What is done can never be undone—

"Could *your tears forever flow,*
Could your zeal no respite know,"

you cannot undo anything that is done. There your past life will always stand. If you are a believer in Jesus, the sin of your past life is forgiven. Still, it was your sin. The penalty of it will never be executed. Still, you did have that evil feeling, you did think that rebellious thought, you did say that word, you did commit that transgression, you did omit the keeping of that precept. There it is and it cannot be altered.

And further, *there is no way of making up for the past of your life.* The duties of today are not the duties of 10 years ago. If I live unto myself during the first 20, 30, 40, or 50 years of my life, I had need to be doubly zealous in the ardor of my service for God in the future. But, still, that does not fill up the void in the past. That does not remove the fact that all those fields behind me lay untilled through many a year, bringing forth nothing but thorns and thistles—no acceptable harvest for my God. Ah, me, this makes "the time past of our life" appear very solemn. Certainly it is true that it has sufficed "to have worked the will of the Gentiles." There is no man here whom God has converted by His Grace, who

wishes that he had spent more of his life in sin. No doubt, it has given him a knowledge of the world, but it is a knowledge of the world which those who have, would be glad to be rid of. I know many a child of God who, when he is in prayer, will have suggested to him, even by the words he uses, some lascivious song. And even what the preacher says, though perfectly pure, may raise before the mind some impure thought, some unhallowed act. It is a blessed thing for a man who has been steeped up to his throat in the bogs of devilry, to be converted, but he who has never seen the world at all has seen quite enough of it. He who has never seen even the hoof of the devil, nor a print which he has made in the earth has seen enough of him. The time past may well suffice us to have worked the will of the Gentiles. If we were converted to God in boyhood, we had had quite enough of sin. Enough, did I say? Far too much, for a single drop of that burning acid will leave a scar upon the flesh even after it has no longer any power to destroy the spirit!

"The time past of our life" seems to me to be *a matter of humiliation* to us all, without exception, but most of all to those who are newly converted. I never mind hearing a man tell that he is converted, but I must confess to feeling a kind of sickness come over me when I have heard some people tell what they used to do before they were converted. I have thought, "I wish that Brother would get away in a corner somewhere and tell that story where nobody could hear it." I have heard some men tell the tale of their past lives as if it really was very grand and very creditable to them to have done such abominable things! A man gets up in a meeting and says, My dear Friends, I have done that which, if it had been known, would have brought me to the gallows." "Then sit down," says someone, "sit down!" A very sensible thing to say, because perhaps the man might die on the gallows if he went on with his story. But some fellows will get up, and, under the pretense that they are going to glorify God, will tell of all manner of filthiness and vice which cannot do any good to anybody. Stand up and cry, Brother, that is the best thing you can do. Or else, sit down, and cover your face, and say, "Concerning those things whereof I am now ashamed, I only pray God, as He has blotted them out of His memory, to put them out of mine, also."

"The time past of our life" ought to also come before us as a *matter of contrast*. A Christian should say, "I cannot do this or that. I used to do it, but that is the very reason why I cannot do it now. I cannot make the angry answer that I once would have done to a man who injured me. The time was when my blood would have been up and I would soon have let him know that he could not insult me in that fashion. But now he may insult me if he pleases, for I am changed, and, by His Grace, I have become a Christian. Time was when, in my business, I would not have minded how the weights went, but now I would far rather defraud myself than injure another." The Christian should recollect the time past to make his present converted life to be a strict contrast to it.

And he should sometimes remember it that it may be a *stimulus to him.* I remember a man who came a considerable distance to worship with us in the House of God, as some of you do. I often notice, when you come to join the Church, if you have to walk five miles here and five

miles back, and I say to you, "It is a very long way," you exclaim, "Oh, it is nothing, Sir! It does me good and I like a walk on Sundays." After you have been here a few years, if you get lukewarm or cold in spirit, those same miles grow terribly long—do they not? And you go somewhere nearer home—there is a great difference between a mile and a mile—as much difference as there is between a heart and a heart. And when the heart changes, the length of the miles increases directly. Well, this man, of whom I was telling you, one day was going to this place of worship and he felt very tired and his legs said, "don't go this morning." So he just pulled up and said, "Ah, you old rascals, you used to go further than that to the theater, and I will make you go to the Tabernacle." So, on he walked.

And, sometimes, it is a good thing to put it to yourself, "Why, I have stood up in the gallery of the theater among the 'gods' when it has been hot enough to bake me! And I will go, though the place is hot, or though the place is cold, to hear the Gospel!" Some of you would have sat on a very bare seat in the days of your flesh to take your enjoyment, and paid your money down as freely as possible to see what only did you harm. But now it often happens that in a place of worship you must have a very soft cushion, be very comfortable and everybody must be very polite to you, or else you get sick and tired of it. O Friend, remember the past in order to chide yourself about the present, and say, "I went through thick and thin for the devil and I will go through thick and thin for Christ! I was never ashamed to acknowledge my old master, I could swear and curse among the worst of his servants. And surely I will not be ashamed to acknowledge Christ, but I will sing to His praise and acknowledge that I belong to Him."

I would like you all to take up these three threads—"No longer," "The rest of His time," "The time past of our life." Wind them round your finger and keep them in your memory, and may God grant that we may all start afresh from this time, to the praise of the glory of His Grace! Amen and amen.

EXPOSTION OF C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 4

Verse 1. *Therefore since Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves, likewise, with the same mind.* Accepting this great Truth of God, that it is well that the flesh should die that the spirit may triumph, even as it was with Christ.

1. *For he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.* If he has, indeed, died with Christ, and the power of Christ's sufferings has made him dead to sin, he has ceased from it.

2-4. *That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God for the time past of our life may suffice us to have worked the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, drinking parties and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.* For the very thing in which they ought to

speak well of you, men will speak evil of you. If you will not drink as they do, if you will not follow after sinful pleasures as they do, if you will not sing their songs, or use their language, then straightway they will hate you and call you a hypocrite. It is a pity that if we are not willing to go into sin as they do, they should, for that reason, speak ill of us, yet this is what we must expect.

5. *Who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.* There will be a day when those who are alive at the coming of Christ will be judged. And those who were dead long before that time will not escape the judgment—for they shall be raised from their graves to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

6. *For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.* Men who heard the Gospel and believed it, and are now dead. They have undergone the sentence of death like other men, but, still, they are living "according to God in the spirit."

7. *But the end of all things is at hand.* We are never told the exact date of the times or seasons which are yet to come. It is the evident aim of the Holy Spirit to keep us on our tiptoes of expectation. We are always to be as men whose Lord may come at any minute of the day or night. "The end of all things is at hand."

7. *Be you, therefore, sober.* Do not get intoxicated with anything, neither with pride, nor with covetousness, nor with the cares of this world. Maintain your equilibrium. Stand steadfast and firm. "Be you, therefore, sober"

7, 8. *And watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves.* For, when Christ comes, He will know you as His disciples if you love one another. But if there is an absence of Christian affection when He comes, He will say at once that you have missed the main mark of discipleship.

8. *For charity shall cover the multitude of sins.* Not your own sins, but the sins of your friends, so that you will not see them. Where love is thin, faults are always thick. Wherever there is true love in the heart, we make many apologies and allowances for the weaknesses and infirmities of our friends. Often we cannot see the faults in them and when we know they are there, we go backward, like the godly sons of Noah, and cover the nakedness upon which we will not think of looking—"for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

9. *Use hospitality, one to another, without grudging.* Whenever saints of God traveled in those days, there were few public inns available for their accommodation, so they stayed with Brothers and Sisters in Christ as they went on their way.

10. *As every man has received the gift, even so minister the same, one to another, as good stewards of the manifold Grace of God.* God's Grace takes many shapes, it is manifold, and He gives to one Brother one form of Grace, and to another quite a different form. And, to a third, yet another form of His blessing. Now, as nations increase their wealth by mutual commerce, so do Christians increase their Grace by a sweet fellowship in the good things with which God has entrusted them.

11. *If any man speaks.* Let him speak thoroughly well, but, in order that he may do so, what shall be his model?

11. *Let him speak as the Oracles of God.* As truthfully, carefully, solemnly, as the Bible, itself, speaks. "If any man speaks, let him speak as the Oracles of God."

11. *If any man ministers, let him do it as of the ability which God gives.* "If any man ministers," or *serves*—if he is called to serve the Church in any capacity—"let him do it as of the ability which God gives."

11. *That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen.* Note how Peter has the same spirit in him as that which burned in the breast of Paul, for he stops in the middle of a letter, lays down his pen, and lifts up his heart to God in an adoring strain of thanksgiving—"to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

12. *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.* In Peter's day the Christians were called, not only to what might be metaphorically termed, "the fiery trial," but they had literally to suffer thus for Christ's sake. Nero had multitudes of Christians brought to his gardens and tied to stakes, that he might light up his midnight revelries by the burning of these godly men and women smeared with pitch. They had to bear even that fiery trial for the name of Christ. Many periods of martyrdom have passed, since then, in which the saints of God have willingly died rather than deny their Lord. We have fallen upon comparatively silken times—a jest, a slander, a calumnious observation—these are the only weapons with which our enemies can smite the most of us.

13, 14. *But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that, when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad, also, with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you.* Did not your Savior say, "Blessed are you when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for, behold, your reward is great in Heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the Prophets." So, be glad about it.

14. *For the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified.* Whenever they speak against you that which is not true, they think that they shall slander the name of God by slandering you, but they do no such thing. As far as they are concerned, God is evilly spoken of, but that is all you could have expected from such people. "But on your part"—and that is the thing you have to look to—"on your part He is glorified."

15. *But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.* A curious mixture that—is it not? A murderer is classed with "a busybody in other men's matters." But, really, people of this latter sort are very obnoxious. There are some who seem as if they cannot mind their own business. I have heard that it is for two reasons. First, because they have not any business to mind and, secondly, they have no mind at all with which to mind their busi-

ness! But these very people think they can mind other people's business and the more is the pity. See how strongly Peter condemns them and asks that none of those to whom he writes may have to suffer because of such wrongdoing.

16, 17. *Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.* Trial and testing must begin there. We must not expect to have our religion taken for granted and ourselves to be saved simply upon our own warranty. We must be tried—"The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed." "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God."

17. *And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?* If the wheat is winnowed, what is to become of the chaff? If God puts even the gold into the fire, what is to become of the dross? If that which is really valuable has to be tested, what is to be done with the mire and the clay? Oh, that all who have no part or lot with Christ would consider this solemn Truth of God!

18. *And if the righteous scarcely are saved*—If they are saved with difficulty—

18. *Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* If even men who live godly lives are often hard put to it to know whether they shall be saved or not—if they raise the question again and again with a terrible seriousness, "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

19. *Therefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in doing well, as unto a faithful Creator.* The whole run of the chapter is that we are to prefer any suffering of the flesh to the sin of the spirit and we are to be prepared to endure whatever trial or pain may come upon us for Christ's sake, and to hear it joyfully, rather than to seek the pleasures of sin and to be plunged under the waves of the wrath of God. May He give us the Grace thus to glorify Him, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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END OF VOLUME 43.