JOY IN GOD
NO. 2550

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 2, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 2, 1884.

"And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement" (or, as it should be, "the reconciliation"). Romans 5:11.

You notice, dear Friends, in reading this verse, the "*not only so,"* and the, "*also."* And, if you look back to the earlier verses of the chapter, you will see that there is a continual rising, as of one ascending a golden staircase. You get an, "also," and a, "not only so," and then a long succession of Christian attainments rising, one out of the other—"Tribulation works patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope makes not ashamed," and so forth—from all which it clearly appears that the Christian life is one of continuous progress. It would be so without a break if we were more careful and lived nearer to God. We would go steadily on from our spiritual childhood and youth and manhood till we became fathers in Christ and, by-and-by, perfect men in Christ Jesus, having reached the fullness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus. I am afraid that we, sometimes, sadly hinder that progress by our lack of prayer and our neglect of communion with God. Still, this is what true Christian life should be—a continuous going from strength to strength till we, every one of us, appear before God in the Zion above.

Let each Believer ask himself how far it is so with him. It is to be feared that there are some who, after many years of Christian profession, are not holier, or stronger in faith, or fuller of wisdom than they were 20 years ago! Some Believers seem to be like the children of Israel in the wilderness—they go forward and backward—their path is very intricate and they make but slow progress towards the heavenly Canaan. Let us, Beloved, labor to grow in Grace! Let us cry to God to enable us to grow. Let us not be satisfied with what we have already attained, but let us always feel an insatiable craving to acquire more and more of the good gifts of the Covenant of Grace, that we may have all things and abound, seeing that all things are provided for us in Christ Jesus our Lord!

But I want, just now, to bring this thought especially under the notice of young beginners in Grace, for I am about to speak of an experience which belongs, rather, to the full-grown Christian than to the newly-born Believer, and it may be that I shall cause trouble of heart to some of the little ones of the Lord's family while I speak of what is more commonly

enjoyed by the greater ones and the stronger ones. I do not mean to do so, but quite the reverse. You, dear Friend, who have been lately brought to Christ, must not judge and condemn yourself if you do not, as yet, possess all the Graces which belong to the more matured saint. No one would think of condemning a child three years old because he was not six feet high! No one would blame him because his little feet would not carry him upon a long journey. No one would expect from him the wisdom which we look for in his father. "You cannot put old heads on young *shoulders,"* says our proverb, and it is very true, and it would be a pity that we should try to do so, for the old heads would be out of place upon young shoulders—let the whole man be of the same age. If, therefore, I talk at this time about a high and noble joy which you have not yet tasted, long for it—and go the right way to gain it—but do not begin to say, "I do not know that joy and, therefore, I am no child of God. I have not partaken of that delight and, therefore, I cannot be a sincere Believer in Jesus." If you do so, you will be acting very unwisely—you will be acting toward yourself in a way in which a father would not think of acting toward his own child! Christian life is a life of *progress*—it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we are going forward, and onward, and upward—and we hope to continue doing so until we behold the face of Him we love! And then "we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is."

A second observation I want to make is that the Christian life has its own peculiar joys. If you look through the chapter from which our text is taken, you will see that it begins with a joy—"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God." That is a smoothly flowing current, fathomless and full of infinite sweetness! I do not know, if I had my choice of the state of heart in which I would wish to be between here and Heaven, whether I would not prefer continual peace to any other condition of mind. It is a blessed thing, sometimes, to soar aloft, as on the wings of eagles, and to seem to play with the young lightning that is at home with the sun! It is a grand thing to live even *here* in the very Presence of God and feel that Earth has grown into a little Heaven! But I find that such an ecstatic state as that is frequently followed by deep depression. Elijah runs before Ahab's chariot, but the next morning he runs away from a woman and asks that he may die. Our great "ups" are not far off equally great "downs." We climb the mountains and then we slip down the cliffs. We descend into the Valley of Humiliation soon after we have been on the tops of the Hills of Communion. If one could always be just quiet and peaceful, it would be best.

Then, in the second verse, the Apostle says, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." That is no small joy, to be always looking for His coming in whose Sovereignty we shall be made kings and, as the result of whose passion we shall be made priests, expecting to behold Him here, and then looking for the revelation of the Glory when we shall be "forever with the Lord." Oh, we have great joy whenever we think of Heaven! Sit down and turn over the passages of Scripture which relate to it. Think of the communion of saints that you shall enjoy and especially of the Beatific Vision of the face of Him "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 must it be to be there? We cannot, at present, tell, but the Apostle says, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." And so we do!

Then, in the third verse, he tells us of another joy of which worldlings certainly never taste. "Not only so, but we glory in tribulations, also." There is a secret sweetness in the gall and wormwood of our daily trials—a sort of ineffable, unutterable, indescribable—but plainly experienced joy in sorrow and bliss in woe! O Friends, I think that the happiest moments I have ever known have been just after the sharpest pains I have ever felt. As the blue gentian flower grows just upon the edge of the Alpine glacier, so, too, extraordinary joys, azure-tinted with the light of Heaven, grow hard by the severest of our troubles, the very sweetest and best of our delights. Then the Apostle tells us, in our text, that we have another joy, of which I am now going to speak, "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Let no man's heart fail him when he hears the experience of the tried people of God! It is true that we have troubles peculiar to the Christian state—there are some sorrows which are not known outside the family of God. They are very blessed, health-giving, purifying sorrows and we would not wish to be without them!

But still, sometimes they are very keen and cut the heart even to its very center. Though that is the case—and we admit that it is—we also have some peculiar joys which no others realize. There are fruits in God's storehouse which no mouth has ever tasted till it has been washed clean by the Word and by the Spirit of God. There are secret things which are not seen by the human eyes, however much enlightened by knowledge, until those eyes have been touched with Heaven's own eye-salve that it may look and still may live—look into the Glory and not be blinded by the wondrous sight! Come, then, you who are tempted by the world's joys, and see where true joy is to be found! Turn away from that painted Jezebel—she will but mock and deceive you—

"Solid joys and lasting treasure,
None but Zion's children know."

If you, young people, give your hearts to Christ, you must not dream that you have come to the end of your delights—you have but begun them. Notwithstanding the trials of a believing life, the ways of wisdom "are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Now, coming more closely to the text, I am going to answer three questions. First, *what is joy in God?* Secondly, *how is this the evidence of reconciliation?* "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." And, thirdly, *why is it that this joy is said to be through our Lord Jesus Christ?*

I. First, then, WHAT IS JOY IN GOD?

Now, my dear Friends, I have before me a topic which far exceeds my ability. I get out of my depth when I have such a question as this to answer, "What is joy in God?" I shall be like the swallow that but touches the brook with its wing and then is up and away again. I can do no more than skim the surface of the subject, but I know that there is, to the Believer, a joy, first, *in the very fact that there is a God.* To the ungodly man,

it would be a great delight if it could be proved that there is no God. When he is at all serious and thinks upon the great problems which concern his own state, he is troubled with the thought of God, for, if there is a God, then sin must be punished. If there is a God, then a life spent in neglect of Him must entail, somehow or other, chastisement and sorrow. The worldling would be glad if he could be thoroughly well assured that the idea of God is "a mere bugbear of priests to keep men in terror," as some say. There is a something within a man that makes him feel and know that the world must have had a Maker. If it is so full of intelligence, a Someone, by His intelligence, superior to all the intelligence of mankind, must have made it—and the man gets troubled as he remembers that he has lived so many years—and yet has forgotten his Maker and broken His Laws.

But the child of God, the regenerate man who feels within him the Nature of God and kinship to the Most High, could not bear the idea of there being no God. Atheism is a black Egyptian night to a soul that once has known God. If we ever come to have joy in Him, anything which robs Him of His Glory makes us grieve. But to prove that there is no God would be to prove that we are orphans! It would prove to us our everlasting poverty and wretchedness! It would be to us an infinite catastrophe if we could ever be convinced that there is no God! Happily, we have no fear of any such a calamity. We delight to know that there is a God and that God is everywhere. Our highest joys are experienced when we are in His most immediate Presence! And if we ever do anything which we should not do, if we are conscious of His Presence, we know that it is wrong—and we have to grieve for doing it. But when we live as in His sight. When we truly walk with God, then we live like Enoch, who "had this testimony, that he pleased God." Then do we realize the truest form of happiness and joy. So, first, we have joy even in the fact that there is a God.

But we have joy, most of all, in the knowledge that *this everlasting God has become our Father.* We take no delight in the universal fatherhood which comes of creation—that is a poor thing and belongs as much to dogs and cats as it does to us, for they are as truly created by God as we are! And that sort of fatherhood, of which I hear men talk, is the portion of those who blaspheme God and live in utter rebellion against Him. It is *not* that of which the Apostle wrote, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" Sirs, until God renews your nature, you are children of the Wicked One—not children of the Most High! Neither have you any right to talk about the fatherhood of God towards you. "You must be born again" and only when you are born again and have believed in Christ, are you God's children, for "as many as received Him, to them gave He power"—the right, or privilege—"to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." But that fatherhood which comes of the spirit of adoption within you—because you have been born into the family of God—in this you may, indeed, rejoice!

Now, can you not, and must you not, if you have believed in Christ, joy in God as you feel that He is, through His abounding Grace, your Father? Whatever He does, He is your Father. When He smiles upon you, He is your Father. If He frowned upon you, He would still be your Father. I have told you before what the old Welsh preacher answered when his friend said to him, "While you are preaching, this morning, may you have the smile of God resting upon you!" "Yes," he replied, "my dear Brother, I hope that I shall have it. But if I do not have the light of God's Countenance, I will speak well of Him behind His back." So we should—when we do not have the Lord smiling upon us—we should speak well of Him behind His back. Let us be resolved to say with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." If He should take away every comfort which I have, I am so persuaded that it will be a Father's love that will dictate the action, that I will still praise Him and magnify Him, do what He may. It is joy, indeed, when you can say that if the Lord is strong, He is strong for you. If He is wise, He is wise for you. If He is unchangeable, He is unchangeable to you and whatever He is and whatever He possesses, He has made Himself over to you to be your possession, saying, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." This, then, is joying in God—first rejoicing that there is a God and then delighting in Him as our Father!

When we once reach this point, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we rejoice in every attribute of God—*we delight in Him as He is revealed.* I fear that in these days many men are very busy trying to construct a god for themselves such as they think God ought to be—and it generally turns out that they fashion a god like themselves, for that saying of the Psalmist concerning idols and idol-makers is still true—"They that make them are like unto them, so is everyone that trusts in them." These modern manufacturers of gods make them blind because they are, themselves, blind, and deaf because they are deaf, and dead because they are spiritually dead. No, Beloved, there is no God but the God revealed in Holy Scripture, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! And the excogitation of another godhead, which has been the business of the sages of the present day, is all a mistake and a delusion! God can only be seen in His own light. He must be His own Revealer and no man can know God except God shall reveal Himself unto him.

I trust that many of us can say that we do rejoice in God as we find Him in the Scriptures. Some quarrel with God as a Sovereign and no doctrine makes them grind their teeth like the glorious Truth of Divine Sovereignty. They profess to want a god, but he must not be on a throne! He must not be King, he must not be absolute and universal Monarch! He must do as his creatures tell him, not as he, himself, wills. I adore that God who says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Such a God as He is needs no limitation! Let Him do as He wills, for it is not possible that He should will to do anything that is unjust or unholy! Let us joy and rejoice in Him as an unlimited Sovereign!

Then let us rejoice in Him as perfectly holy. The holiness of God is an attribute that may well fill us with awe. To the eyes of ungodly men, it shines like "the terrible crystal" of which Ezekiel speaks, but, in the Word of God, whenever the song rises higher than usual, you will generally find that it is a hymn in praise of the holy God. Yes, this is the song of Heaven—"They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." The wholeness of the Divine Nature is seen in His holiness. There is in Him no defect, no excess—He is altogether just such as a holy soul must delight in.

I trust also, dear Friends, that you and I can joy in God as to His justice. The justice of God makes men dread Him till they become His children. There are some, today, who pretend to preach the Gospel, but who really are preaching "another Gospel which is not another." And they try to set forth the littleness of sin and, as for the justice of God, it seems to be ignored by them! Their effeminate deity is not worthy to be known by the name of God! But our God is terrible in His justice and He will, by no means, clear the guilty—and conscience tells every man this. But the Believer in Jesus, when he sees what God did that justice might be satisfied—and that love might freely flow to the unworthy when he beholds Christ crucified, the great Father piercing His Son with sharpest smart that He might justly put away the sin of His people—then he comes to delight in God's justice! Instead of threatening him, God's justice becomes the guardian of his salvation with a drawn sword protecting him from condemnation! Happy is the man who can say of every attribute of God that he adores it—the man who would not have turned back at the Red Sea and not refused to sing unto the Lord who had triumphed gloriously in His righteous vengeance upon the ungodly! Bow your heads before God as He is, as He declares Himself to be in His own Word, for if you do not, you are not reconciled to Him! But if you are truly reconciled to Him, you will accept Him without question in all those points that seem dark and mysterious. You will believe those doctrines which sometimes grate upon the ears as you hear of them, and you will say, "Though I cannot understand, I adore. And when I tremble before the Lord so that the joints of my bones are loosed and I fall prostrate at His feet, yet even in those dread mysteries I feel that I love and I joy in God."

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, what a blessed and transcendent joy this joy in the Lord is! Sometimes you joy in your children, yet they die and then you sorrow. At other times you rejoice in those who are grown up and are prospering, but perhaps they treat you with ingratitude and then, again, your joy is gone. You joy in your health and that is a great blessing—but you sicken and your joy departs. Some rejoice in their riches, but wealth takes to itself wings and flies away. You may joy in a choice friend, but after a while you may be forsaken and forgotten. You may joy, perhaps, in past achievements and there may come to you a joy in your prospects for the future—but there is no joy equal to joy in God! Suppose I have nothing in the house but God? Suppose there is nothing for me to rely upon but God, nothing that I can call my own but God? Well, is that a little thing? Are not all creatures but the visions of an

hour? But the Creator is the substantial All in All, so that he who has God has all that he can possibly need! God, to His people, is the fullness out of which all their needs shall be supplied. What a mercy it is that when we can joy in nothing else, we can joy in God! We can joy in His power, for He can help us. We can joy in His faithfulness, for He cannot fail us. We can joy in His Immutability, for He changes not and, therefore, we are not consumed. We can joy in every thought that we have of Him, for altogether and observed from every point of view, He is the delight of His people!

Well now, dear Friends, if we have come as far as that, we can also say that we joy in God *in all His dealings with us.* "That is hard work," says one. But when you perfectly joy in God, you joy in everything that He does! Suppose you had a dear friend who came to your house and suppose you should say to him, "anything that there is, you may enjoy, or you may take. I will give you anything you can ask for or desire. I owe my life and all my prosperity to you." Well, if you did miss this and that of your treasures which you might like to have retained, when you heard that your friend had them, you would be quite content. According to that good old parable, when the master went into the garden and took a very choice rose, the gardener did not trouble himself at the loss of it when he knew who had plucked it. He was so glad that the master admired it, that he could even rejoice that it had gone! Now, dear Friends, can you not get to this point, that if the Lord brings you comforts, you will not rejoice in them so much as in Him who brings them? You say that you can get as far as that, but if the Lord takes away your comforts, can you come to this point, that you will not sorrow over them, but that you will joy in Him who took them away? The drops are gone, yes, but there is the fountain always flowing. Though the sunbeam is hidden from your eyes, the sun is always shining. Therefore always rejoice in God, your All in All, and say, "Yes, I will rejoice in all His dealings with me." Looking back on the whole of my own life, I desire to bless God for everything that He has ever done for me. I desire to praise Him for every cut of the rod, for every blow of the hammer, for every melting in the furnace, for the crucible and the burning heat. Everything has commenced and continued and concluded as it ought to do, according to His infinite love and wisdom and I, therefore, joy in all that God does to me and bless His holy name!

Then I think that we also learn to joy *in all God's requirements of us* and *in all His teachings.* In all that He tells us and in all that He reveals to us of the world to come, we learn to joy in God. Thus, as I told you, I have only touched the surface of this great subject. I pray the Holy Spirit will reveal to you all that there is in the blessed Trinity in which we can rejoice. This God is our God and He has said, "Delight yourself, also, in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." There is no fear of your delighting too much in Him, so let your hearts be filled with joy! Take down your harps from the willows and touch every string with sacred delight as you joy in God!

II. I was, next, to have answered the question, HOW IS THIS JOY THE EVIDENCE OF OUR RECONCILIATION TO GOD? I have occupied so much time over the first part of my theme that I must not dwell upon this portion of the subject. But it must be clear to you that any man who can truly joy in God is reconciled to God. That God is reconciled to him is certain, or else the man would not be reconciled to God, for no sinner was ever beforehand with God. And if I love God, I may be sure that He long ago loved me. But one of the most glorious evidences of a man being reconciled to God is when he rejoices in God!

Suppose he becomes obedient to certain outward precepts that he may be and yet be very sorry that he has to be obedient to them? Suppose he begins to repent and mourn to think that he has sinned—he may do that and yet there may be in his heart the wish that he could have his full of sin without fear of punishment. But when a man feels, "There is no one in the world that I love as I love God. There is none that I adore as I adore the Lord. For Him I would live, for Him I would die. He is everything to me. He is the source of my delight and the spring of all my joys"—why, that man is perfectly reconciled to God! You can see that the enmity in his heart is slain. You can see that now God's purposes are his purposes and God's desires are his desires. That which God hates, this man hates. That which God loves, this man loves. You can see that he is perfectly reconciled to God because he rejoices in God!

As for that part of the reconciliation which has to do with God, Himself—about that no question can possibly arise! The difficulty never was as to how to reconcile God to a sinner, but to reconcile the sinner to God. The Lord Jesus Christ has done perfectly that which enables God, with justice, to manifest mercy to the guilty. That is done—you may take that for granted. And you can be sure that it is done in your case when this lesser matter of reconciling you to God is most assuredly accomplished, as it is when you, "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

III. My last question is, WHY IS THIS JOY SAID TO BE THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST?

Why, first, *because it is through Him we have received this reconciliation.* No man can rejoice in an unreconciled God. As long as you look up to God and see Him bound by the justice of His Nature to punish you for your sin, you cannot delight in Him—you are filled with dread and dismay. But when you see Christ making a full Atonement for sin. When you know that because you have believed in Him, you have the sure evidence that He made Atonement for your sins in particular, and put them away, then you feel that you are reconciled to God. God, apart from Christ, must be the object of dread to the guilty, but God, in Christ Jesus, upon the Throne with the Covenant rainbow round about Him—that God becomes our joy and delight!

I believe that in the world in general men talk a great deal more about God than they do about Jesus Christ. At least, they speak about, "Providence," and about "the Almighty" and so forth. And there are some who say, "Yes, God is good. He has been very good to me." And in common parlance you hear much about God. But, ah, my dear Hearer, well as

that may be, it is all ignorant misunderstanding until you see God in Christ Jesus! For you unconverted people there can be nothing about God that can be comforting to you until you see Him revealing Himself by His own Son, the great Sacrifice for sin. "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." No man comes unto the Father but by Christ. He that has seen Christ has seen the Father, but he who knows not God, knows not Christ, however frequently he may speak about Him. So that it is God seen through Jesus Christ to whom we are reconciled and in Him we joy, in the reconciled God who has at His side—

"The Man of love, the Crucified"

—of whom we sang just now.

Furthermore, we only joy in God being reconciled to us *when we have been, ourselves, viewing the Lord Jesus Christ.* Is there anything that makes a man love God like a sight of Christ? You may, when you are well trained, love God for all His goodness in Creation and Providence, but the heart is never truly tuned to love until it comes to Calvary. And I believe that afterwards, the waves of love never rise to Atlantic billows except when the wind blows from Calvary. When I behold Him who is the Best-Beloved of the Father, an Infant in His mother's arms, a sorrowing Man toiling over the rough roads of Palestine. When I behold Him as a bound Victim led to the slaughter and willingly yielding up His life in a cruel and shameful death that He may redeem us from the curse of the Law of God, then my heart clings to the heart of God as a child clings to its mother! Blessed be God the Father, since we have beheld God the Son and our hearts have been renewed by God the Holy Spirit!

We can joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no joy in God except as you see Jesus Christ intimately knit with Him and with yourself. Do not try to go to God by any other way than through this golden gate of the great Sacrifice of your redeeming Lord! But just now sit here and joy in God—and then go home and still joy in God. Perhaps when you reach your door there will be some bad news for you. If so, still joy in God. Possibly when you get home there will be an ungodly husband, there, and no peace or comfort in the house—still joy in God! Perhaps when you sit down to your evening meal the question may arise, "Where will the next one be found?" Yet still joy in God. Say, with the Prophet, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shal1 be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

If you have, between here and Heaven, no source of joy but your God, it shall be with you as when the rock was smitten in the wilderness and the stream followed Israel through all their journeys! But if you have all that heart could wish for and yet do not joy in God, you have not tasted what true joy is—you have only the pretense and the mockery of an adulterated delight. But if you get just a sip of true joy in God, though it is but as a drop by the way until you get to the wellhead in the home country, you shall be cheered and comforted in a manner that worldlings cannot understand! I would that some of you would come and trust the

Lord. You cannot joy in Him till you have trusted Him. But if you trust in Jesus as your Savior, you shall go onward, step by step, till even God Himself shall be an infinite delight to your every thought! God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *ROMANS 8:19-39.*

Verse 19. *For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.* The whole Creation is in a waiting posture, waiting for the glory yet to be revealed.

20, 21. *For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope, because the creation, itself, also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.* Everything here is blighted and subject to storm, or to decay, or to sudden death, or to calamity of some sort. It is a fair world, but there is the shadow of the Curse over it all. The slime of the serpent is on all our Edens. "The creation itself was made subject to vanity," but it "also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

22. *For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.* The birth pangs of the Creation are on it. The living creature within is moving itself to break its shell and come forth.

23. *And not only they, but ourselves, also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* That is our state now. At least it is the condition of the most of us. Some of our brethren have gone ahead so tremendously that they have passed out of the world of groaning altogether—they are perfect! I regret that they are not in Heaven—it would seem to be a much more proper place for them than this imperfect earth is. But as for us, our experience leads us, in sympathy with the Apostle, to say that we are groaning after something better. We have not received it yet. We have the beginnings of it. We have the earnest of it. We have the sure pledge of it, but it is not, as yet, our portion to enjoy—we are "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body"—for, though the soul is born again, the body is not. "The body is dead," says the Apostle, in the 10th verse of this chapter, "because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness." There is a wonderful process through which this body shall yet pass—and then it shall be raised, again, a glorious body fitted for our regenerated spirit—but as yet it remains unregenerate.

24. *For we are saved by hope.* Hope contains the major part of our salvation within itself.

24-26. *But hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we, with patience, wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities.* That same Spirit who gave us the spirit of adoption. That same Spirit who set us longing for something higher and better, "also helps our infirmities."

And we have so many of them that we show them even when we are on our knees.

26. *For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit, Himself, makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered.* There seems to be a good deal of this groaning. It is only in Heaven that there are—

"No groans to mingle with the songs
Which warble from immortal tongues."

But down here a groan is, sometimes, the best wheel for the chariot of progress! We sigh, and cry, and groan to grow out of ourselves, and to grow more like our Lord. And so we become more fit for the glory which shall be revealed in us.

27. *And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.* That is the whole process of prayer. The Spirit of God knows the will of the Father and He comes and writes it on our hearts. A true prayer is the Revelation of the Spirit of God to our heart, making us desire what God has appointed to give us. Hence the success of prayer is no difficulty to the man who believes in predestination. Some foolishly say, "If God has ordained everything, what is the use of praying?" If God had *not* ordained everything, there would be no use in praying, but prayer is the shadow of the coming mercy which falls across the spirit—and we become, in prayer, in some degree, gifted like the seers of old. The spirit of prophecy is upon the man who knows how to pray! The Spirit of God has moved him to ask for what God is about to give!

28. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God,* "*All* things." That is a very comprehensive expression, is it not? It includes your present trouble, your aching head, your heavy heart—"all things." "All things *work.*" There is nothing idle in God's domain. "All things work *together.*" There is no discord in the Providence of God. The strangest ingredients go to make up the one matchless medicine for all our maladies. "All things work together *for good*"—for lasting and eternal good—"*to them that love God.*" That is their *outward* character.

28. *To them who are the called according to His purpose.* That is their *secret* character and the reason why they love God at all.

29. *For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son that He might be the first-born among many brethren.* Oh, what a glorious privilege is yours and mine if we are, indeed, children of God! We are, in some respects, children of God in the same sense as Christ Himself is—He is the First-Born and we are among His "many brethren."

30. *Moreover whom He did predestinate; them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.* Notice that personal pronoun, "He—how it comes at the beginning and goes on to the end. "Salvation is of the Lord." This is so often forgotten that, trite as it may appear, we cannot repeat it too often—"Whom *He* did foreknow, *He* also did predestinate. Whom *He* did predestinate, them *He* also called, and whom *He* called, them *He* also justified: and whom *He* justified, them *He* also glorified." You might suppose, from

the talk of some men, that salvation is all of the man, himself—that is free agency pushed into a *lie*—a plain Truth of God puffed into a lie! There is such a thing as free agency and we would make a great mistake if we forgot it. But there is also such a thing as Free Grace and we would make a still greater mistake if we limited that to the agency of man! It is God who works our salvation from the beginning to the end!

31. *What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* If God is that great working One who does all this, who can be against us? "Why, a great many," says one! But they are nothing, nor are all put together anything at all compared with Him who is on our side!

32, 33. *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? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? God that justifies?* No, that is impossible! And if He does not lay anything to their charge, what cause have they to fear?

34. *Who is He that condemns? It is Christ that died?* What? Die for them and then condemn them? Nobody can condemn them but the Judge! And if He is unable to condemn them, in consequence of what He has already done for them, then none can. But this is not all.

34. *Yes, and furthermore, is risen again who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.* Will He blow hot and cold—first intercede for them and then condemn them? It cannot be!

35. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? "Quis separabit?"* That should be our motto in every time of trial—"who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

35, 36. *Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.* They have all had their turn, but did any of them, or all of them put together, ever divide the saints from Christ?

37-39. *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Blessed, forever blessed, be His holy name! 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 KNOWLEDGE OF SIN
NO. 2551

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 9, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 19, 1884.

"O God, You know my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from You."
Psalm 69:5.

IT seems, then, that the best of men have a measure of foolishness in them and that, sometimes, that foolishness shows itself. How gentle and tender ought we to be with others who are foolish when we remember how foolish we are, ourselves! How sincerely ought we to rejoice in Christ, as made of God unto us wisdom, when we see the folly that is bound up in our hearts and which too often shows itself in our talk and in our acts! Yet while the best of men have folly in them, it is one of the marks of a good man that he knows it to be folly and that he is willing to confess his sin before God. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." If we stand as the Pharisee stood in the Temple and cry, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are," we shall go home, as the Pharisee did, without the justification which comes from God. It is the truly good man who stands afar off with the publican and cries, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," and he, also, shall go to his house "justified rather than the other."

There is one solemn thought which deeply impresses the man who is right at heart, but who sees his own foolishness and sin and mourns it—and that thought is that *God* sees it—and sees it more perfectly than he sees it, himself. His own sight of it makes him repent and humble himself. And his knowledge of God's sight of it helps him to that repentance and humiliation. God sees everything concerning every man, but the most of men care not about God seeing them. They do not give it so much as a passing thought. It is the gracious man, the child of God who, from a broken heart, cries out, "O God, You know my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from You." And this it is that makes a Christian man so greatly value the precious blood of Christ and the perfect righteousness which Jesus Christ has worked out, albeit that Omniscience still perceives sin, yet Justice does not perceive it.

God knows we are sinners, but He imputes to all Believers the righteousness of Christ and looks upon them as they are in Him. He cleanses us in the precious blood of Jesus so that we are clean in His sight and,

"accepted in the Beloved." What a wonderful Atonement is that which hides from God that which cannot be hidden, so that God does not see what, in another sense, He must always see—and forgets what it is impossible for Him, in another sense, ever to forget! In a just and judicial way, God casts our sin behind His back and ceases to see iniquity in His people because they are clean, every whit, through washing in the—

"Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

Now, looking at our text, I am going to call attention to the great Truth of the Omniscience of God, desiring that each one of us may say from our heart, "O God, You know my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from You."

I. First, concerning God's knowledge of man's sin, I remark that IT MUST BE SO. I am not going to argue, but just to talk a little to set this Truth of God before you with greater assurance of certainty.

God must know our foolishness, for, first, He is *infinite in knowledge.* We cannot conceive of a God whose knowledge is limited. That condition belongs to the finite, the creature, but not to the Infinite, the Creator, the great First Cause of everything! God knows all the past, all the present and all the future. He knows all the things that might have been and are not. He knows what might have come out of certain germs and what yet may come, which at the present seems to be far remote. All knowable things must be known to the Most High—the very Nature of God implies it and, therefore, He must know *my foolishness,* for I know something of it myself—He must know much more than I know and my sins are not hid from him, for they are not altogether hidden from myself. God must know perfectly what I only perceive in part, though that partial perception is terrible to my own heart. Yes, the infinite knowledge of God is an absolute certainty and, consequently, His knowledge of the folly and sin of every heart is beyond all question.

Moreover, God is *everywhere present.* At all times, He is in every place and, therefore, our foolishness and sin must be known to Him. It is not merely that you committed a folly or a sin and that it was *reported* to God. No, but He was there during the doing of it. What? Though the blinds were drawn and the doors were fast closed? Yet HE was there and all through the sin He stood by you and observed your every thought and every movement! There is no darkness that hides from Him, nor any other form of screen that can be used to shut out the glances of the eyes of the Eternal. He does not see from a distance, but He is on the spot. You cannot conceive of a place where God is not, for He fills all space! There could no more be a boundary to His existence than to His knowledge and, therefore, we are sure that our text is true, "O God, You know my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from You."

Moreover, God is also *everywhere perceiving.* He is never a blind God, nor a blindfolded God. His knowledge is never, even for a moment, stopped and rendered intermittent, but, as His Presence is on the highest

hill and in the deepest cavern, far away on the wild sea or in the plain where the foot of man has scarcely made a track, so, in that Presence there is a constant sight, an unfailing observation at all times. You would not, I hope, reduce God to the level of One who has eyes and sees not! "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" The fact that eyesight and hearing come from Him proves how abundantly He possesses those faculties, Himself. He sees and He hears in every place and there was never anything done of man without His knowledge. The secret murder, the silent plot where everybody had sworn an oath of secrecy—all was known to God. There was never a thought in a human mind, although the man had not uttered it in words even to himself, but what the Lord perceived it. Does not this make the fact certain that He knows my foolishness and that my sins are not hidden from Him? Infinite in knowledge, everywhere present, and everywhere perceiving everything, He must know my foolishness and my sin. Dr. Watts forcibly expresses this idea in his hymn on God's Omnipresence—

"In all my vast concerns with You,
In vain my soul would try
To shun Your Presence, Lord, or flee
The notice of Your eyes.
Your all-surrounding sight surveys
My rising and my rest.
My public walks, my private ways,
And secrets of my breast.
If winged with beams of morning light,
I fly beyond the west.
Your hand, which must support my flight,
Would soon betray my rest.
If over my sins I think to draw
The curtains of the night.
Those flaming eyes that guard Your Law
Would turn the shades to light.
The beams of noon, the midnight hour,
Are both alike to Thee—
Oh, may I never provoke that power
From which I cannot flee!"

Beside that, God is *always reading the heart.* We have heard a good deal about thought-reading. I hope that the most of you will never be gifted in that direction, for such a power would make it very unpleasant for many. One said that he wished that he had a window in his bosom, that everybody might read his thoughts. I think that if he were at all a sensible man, he would need to pull the blind down before long! There is something which, now and again, crosses the purest mind which he would not wish another to perceive—and he who watches his thoughts with an exemplary vigilance will sometimes be off his guard and tolerate an imagination which he would not wish to pollute any other person's mind. But though we cannot read each other's hearts, God can read them. There is no possibility of lying to the Lord so as to deceive Him. He

reads the hypocrite when he puts on his fine vestments and prays his prayer in the most devout style—and even when he gets into his closet and bows before his God only after a formal manner. We may have performed what looked like a holy deed. We may have sung a solemn Psalm. We may have appeared unto our fellow men to be among the excellent of the earth, but if it is not really so, no one can hide himself in secret, or conceal the deceit of his spirit in the dark place from the eyes of the Most High.

Though you should climb to the top of Carmel in the pride of your heart, or go down with Jonah to the bottoms of the mountains in your deceit, yet shall He find you out, strip you, unmask you and set you in the sunlight to be despised of men and all intelligent beings, as they, also, shall see your lies. O Beloved, God must have seen my foolishness! And my sins cannot be hid from Him since He reads the secrets of the heart and the tortuous passages of the soul are easily threaded by His unerring wisdom!

We are sure, also, that He knows our foolishness and our sin because *He knows what is yet to be.* To know what men have already done is a light matter compared with knowing what men will yet do. There are black crimes which are recorded by Moses in Scripture which Moses never could have known if God had not first seen them and then communicated the knowledge of them to him. There are many incidents mentioned in the Pentateuch which could only have come to the knowledge of Moses through the Revelation of the Spirit of God and, therefore, God Himself knew all about those events. But, throughout the prophecies there are intimations of the sins of men that would yet be committed and, more especially, that sin of sins—the Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ—that crime of crimes is described in all its dreadful details!

Now, if God saw all that and recorded it by the agency of His servants centuries before it happened, there can be no hope that anything which has ever occurred has escaped the observation of the Most High! You are all books and every page is open to the eyes of the great Reader who reads you from the first letter to the last! There is nothing which any man can possibly conceal from God. Men love what they call, secrets, yet there are no such things in very truth where God is concerned, for He observes everything! It matters not what it may be—minute or majestic, malevolent or benevolent, a curse or a blessing—it all passes before that eye which never wearies or sleeps, or suffers anything to escape its notice! It is so, it must be so if God is God—He knows my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from Him.

II. Now let us just turn the current of our thought while I ask, concerning God's knowledge of man's sin, AFTER WHAT FASHION IS IT? If God knows, in what particular way does He know?

The answer is, that *it is complete knowledge.* The Lord knows us altogether. I must confess that I cower down beneath that thought. That the Lord should know my public service is sufficiently awe-striking—but that

He should know my *private* thoughts—ah, this sinks me into the very dust! The Lord knows not only the action, but the *motive of the action*—all the thoughts that went with my action, all the pride and self-seeking that came after it—and spoiled it when it might have been praiseworthy. "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord ponders the hearts." The word, "ponders," means that He weighs us, He takes the specific gravity of our actions. They may cover a great surface, yet there may be no real substance in them at all—but the Lord weighs them as goldsmiths weigh the metal that is subjected to their test. He takes care not to be deceived by anything that is apparent to our fellow men. "The fining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold: but the Lord tries the hearts." There is nothing hidden from God's eyes—every separate part of us is open to His perpetual inspection! Think of that. God's knowledge is complete and baffles all evasion.

It is also *the knowledge of a holy Being.* You, perhaps, know some people who see all they can, yet do not see all that can be seen. It is with them as it was with the lady who said to Turner, as she looked upon one of his notable paintings, "Mr. Turner, I have never seen anything like that." "No," replied the artist, "I don't suppose that you have seen it. Don't you wish that you could?" So, when God looks at a man's life, He sees infinitely more in it than the man ever saw in it, himself, or than all his fellow creatures have seen. The keen eyes of envy and of malice will detect a fault, if fault there is, but keener is the eye of perfect holiness! The Lord's eyes are as a flame of fire. Being, Himself, essential Truth, He truly discovers everything that is within us and makes no mistakes. When we are dealing with God, mistakes on His part are quite out of the question. He knows us after the manner of a perfectly holy Being and many a thing that looked white to us, is absolutely black to God! His eyes can see according to the clear white light of Heaven, but you and I can only see in some single ray of faint light—we see not as God sees. We shall, one day, be holy as He is holy, and we shall then look upon the affairs of this life in a strangely different light from that in which we look upon them now. And when once we get to Heaven, we shall realize how foolish we were to form the judgments that we did while we were here. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then, face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as, also, I am known." Think of this, dear Friends—the eyes that see you are the eyes of a perfectly holy God who, therefore, more readily discovers your shortcomings and your sins than all the eyes of men could do!

Reflect, again, that *God knows us with an abiding knowledge.* It is a great mercy that time brings with it relief of our sorrows by the oblivion in which it steeps us. You lost your mother and you could not have lived a month suffering the pangs that you felt in the moment that you realized your loss. All your losses are the same as they were when they first befell you, but they do not eat into your spirit with that terrible force which was in them at the onset, for time has taken off their edge. It is so

with sin—the first time that the youth told a lie, he could not sleep—but that first time was 40 years ago and he is almost sorry that I have brought it to his recollection! After a while, time covers up the remembrance of sin and we think that God has covered it up, too, but every sin, even of 50 years ago, is present to God's eyes just as if you were committing it at this moment! And your whole life does not stand out to Him as the dim past and the bright present—it is all *present* to Him. As when a man looks on a map and the whole of the country is before him, so does God look down upon our life as it is spread out for His inspection—He sees it all at once. Up from the graves of forgetfulness where you have buried them, your sins perpetually rise and confront the Judgment Seat of God. Think seriously of this matter, for it is after this manner that God knows our foolishness and that our sins are not hid from Him.

The Lord has *an eternal knowledge of* our sins. He will never forget them. If they are not washed away by the blood of Christ, He can never forget or cease to be angry because of them! He has written the record of man's sin in a book—He means it, therefore, to abide. He says, "Is not this laid up in store with Me, and sealed up among My treasures?" It is as if He had put men's sin by, to be called as a damning witness against them in that Great Day when every action and word and thought shall pass before the Judgment Seat. I do not know how this thought makes you feel, but it makes me tremble while I speak of it!

For, further, all our sins are *known to Him who is to be our Judge.* There will be no need of witnesses in that last dread day, for the Judge knows all about us! There will be no need to call this one and that to bear testimony as to our sin, for the Judge saw it, heard it and He has never forgotten it, nor does His memory fail Him as to any of the details. He will flash that eternal light of His into the conscience of the criminal and write upon the tablet of his heart the revived memory of all that he had forgotten—and there cannot be a more terrible Hell for a man than to be in the grasp of his memory and of his conscience in the Last Great Day. Yet so it will be and I beg each unconverted man, woman and child to recollect that his foolishness and his sin are known to Him to whom he must give an account at the Day of Judgment.

One thought more might, perhaps, tend to impress some who have not yet felt the force of this Truth of God, and that is that *this knowledge will be published.* If God knows about our sin, it is tantamount to everybody knowing about it. "Oh," says someone, "I trust it will not be so! I hope that nobody knows of that dark deed of mine." I tell you, Sir, everybody shall know of it, "for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." There shall come a day, the Day for which all other days were made, when the books shall be opened and every man shall give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or whether they have been evil and, further, our Savior said, "That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment." Can we bear to have it all

known? Yet known it shall be, written as across the sky, when those we have deceived and deluded shall discover what we were—and we shall wake up to everlasting shame and contempt unless we find shelter in the atoning Sacrifice and are washed in the precious blood of Christ! If I could speak of these Truths of God as I ought to speak of them, they would move your hearts. I pray God that they may.

III. And now, thirdly, WHAT THEN? If God *sees* everything and sees it in the fashion I have tried to describe, what then?

Why, first, *how frivolous must those be who never think about it! A* man is about to commit a crime, but his child is present, so he hesitates, or somebody looks in the window and he cannot do the wrong he intended. How is it that men will tremble under the eyes of a child and almost at the presence of a dog—and yet God's Presence is nothing at all to them? A man, about to steal, had taken his child with him to help him secure the booty. He looked all round and said, "There is nobody here, Boy." But the lad said, "Father, there is one way you did not look—you did not look up—God can see you." Just so. Men do not look up and if you tell them that God sees them, of what account is He to them? This is practical atheism, yet men say that *they* would not have crucified Christ. Sirs, as far as you can, you kill God, for you put Him out of your thoughts! You make nothing of Him and what is that but the Crucifixion of God? You despise Him so much that His Presence has no effect upon you, though the presence of any mortal man would have stopped you from your sin!

Next, dear Brothers and Sisters, *what care this ought to work in us!* How diligently we ought to do our work for God! How earnestly we ought to pray when we know that we always have the great Taskmaster's eyes upon us! Or, better still, that dear eye that looked in pity upon us when we were lost and ruined! The eyes of the Well-Beloved, who gave Himself for us, are always fixed upon us. "Fight, my children," said a Highland chieftain, "fight and conquer, for your chieftain, though he lies here bleeding, has his eyes upon you." And they fought like tigers under their leader's eye and thus should Christians fight against sin when the eyes of the beloved Captain who died for them is always upon them! There must be no sleeping, there must be no "scamping" of our work, as bad workmen do when the master is away. It must be gold, silver and precious stones that we build with—and every stone must be well laid upon the one great Foundation. Everything must be done at the very best because God sees it. You know how the heathen sculptor put it—he was working with his chisel and hammer upon the back part of a statue of which only the front was to be seen. The back part was to be built into the wall, so someone said to him, "Why are you toiling so elaborately at that which will be hidden in the wall?" He answered, "The gods can see inside the wall." The heathen gods could not see, but our God can and, therefore, the secret part of one's life is, perhaps, the most important part of it! That which is never meant for the eyes of man, but wholly for the eyes of God, ought to have a double care exercised in the perfecting

of it, that His eyes may rest upon it with a sacred complacency, according to His abounding Grace and mercy.

And *what holy trembling this ought to put within us!* It is often a joy to think that God knows everything. It was a true comfort to Peter when he could *say,* "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." It is a great joy, when you are slandered and misrepresented, to be able to say, "Well, God knows the way that I take. And when He has tried me, He will bring me forth as gold. My true record is on high, so I need not fear what the record below may be." That is a very delightful thought! At the same time, can any among you look forward to that Last Great Day without some trembling? Does it not take all your faith in the atoning blood and in the Divine Substitute to gird up your loins that you may face that Day without fear? Yes, and even that you may now live in the full conviction that your life is all known to God?

Just let us think for a minute or two more about this subject and then I will close. The Lord knows all about us, so that He knows our omissions. I do not know any subject that so much depresses me, humbles me and lays me in the dust as the thought of my omissions. It is not what I have done about which I think so much as of what I have not done. "You have been very useful," says one. "Yes, but might I not have been 10 times more useful?" "You have been very diligent," says another. "Yes, but might I not, somehow, have been more diligent? Might I not have done my work in a better spirit? If I had been better, would not my work have been better? If I had borrowed more of my Master's strength, which I might have had, might I not have accomplished much more?" Do you ever feel satisfied with yourself? If so, I would advise you to fling that satisfaction out of the window, as Jehu said of the painted Jezebel, "Throw her down!" A sense of satisfaction with yourself will be the death of your progress and it will prevent your sanctification. Many a man might have been sanctified if he had not thought that he was already sanctified. By that thought he clutched the shadow and so he lost the substance! Mind that such a thing as that does not happen to you.

Our Lord knows all the faults of our holy things—the coldness of our prayers, the wandering of our thoughts, the scantiness of our alms-giving and the hardness of our hearts—so that they do not go in generous tenderness with the gift we feel bound to bestow. Our sermons, our Bible reading, our Sunday school teaching—the Lord sees the faults of them—while our friends often see the excellences of them. I have had many abusive letters at different periods of my life, but specially in the early part of my career in London I think that I had as much abuse as ever fell to the lot of anybody. But, as I read letter after letter, I said to myself, "O foolish writers, if you knew me better, you could say sharper things than *these*—that would sting me much more—but, happily, you have never been able to lay your hands on the truth. You have had to tell a lie in order to abuse me and that does not hurt me a bit. If you had known me as God does, you might have had something to say which would have

caused me great sorrow." If men could read the secrets of your soul, sincere though you have tried to be, they would see such failures, slips and errors that you would not dare to set your holiest things in the light of day—yet the Lord knows the sins—even of your holy things.

Then the Lord also knows our lies. That is a very tender point. "We do not lie," we say, but is there any man among us who is perfectly true? When you prayed, did you not say a little more than you had ever attained in your own experience? Or you were talking about yourself and you wished to be very sincere and truthful, but you put just a touch of color into the picture, did you not? At least you painted yourself with your finger over your scars—there are not many like Oliver Cromwell, who said, "If you make a portrait of me, paint me as I am, warts and all." You may do that with the warts on your forehead, but I question whether you would like the warts on your *character* to be seen. "I hate flattery," says one. Why, you are flattering yourself all the while that you are saying that! "But," says one, "I feel that I am humble." Do you? Then I guess that you are not really so, for he who is humble still laments his pride and thus shows his humility better than in any other way. But, whatever we are, God sees all our lies and there is nothing hidden from Him.

Lastly, the Lord knows—and this is the best thing that He knows about us—He knows, concerning some of us, that we are clinging to Christ alone! Unless I am utterly deceived, I can truthfully say to the Lord Jesus Christ—

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on You."

Can you say the same, dear Friend? If you can, take heart. Do not be afraid of God knowing all, but rather say, as we read a little while ago, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Pray with David, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." Come and cast yourself upon the Omniscience of God, desiring to be cleansed—spirit, soul and body—and made meet to enter where the redeemed and glorified Church adores the Lord forever without fault before His Throne!

God bless this searching message to every one of you for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. G. SPURGEON:
PSALM 139.

1. *O LORD, You have searched me, and known me.* God does not need to "search" us, for that implies a lack of knowledge, a knowledge obtained by search. But the meaning of the text is that God knows us as well as if He *had* examined us through and through, just as an excise officer searches a house to find contraband goods. "O Lord, You have searched me, and known me."

2. *You know my sitting down, and my rising up.* "Such commonplace things as these, my sitting down at home, my rising up to go to my business, You, O Lord, observe and know even such minor matters as these."

2. *You understand my thoughts afar off.* "Before the thought has entered my mind, You know what it will be. When I run far away from You in my own apprehension, You are still so near to me that You can hear my mind think and You know the meaning of my thoughts when I try to think crookedly."

3. *You compass my path and my lying down,* "You surround me when I go out, or when I rest at home; when I labor, or when I sleep. You set a fence around about my every action and my non-action, too."

3. *And are acquainted with all my ways.* "You know all that I do, as One that is most intimate and familiar with me. You, great God, 'are acquainted with all my ways.'"

4. *For there is not a word on my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, You know it altogether.* "Not only the words *of* my tongue, but the words *on* my tongue, are known to You, O Lord." As we sang just now—

"My thoughts, before they are my own,
Are to my God distinctly known!
He knows the words I mean to speak,
Ere from my opening lips they break."

5. *You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me.* "I am taken as in an ambush: I am held captive; I cannot get away. 'You have beset me behind and before'—more than that, You have arrested me, 'laid Your hand upon me.'"

6. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.* "You have it, but I cannot reach it. You have it, but, 'I cannot attain unto it.'"

7, 8. *Where shall I go from Your spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, You are there.* For so it runs in the Hebrew. The translators put in the word, "are," as you can see by the italics. "If I ascend up into Heaven, you there"—that is all the Psalmist says.

8. *If I make my bed in Hell, behold, You.* Again it is more emphatic without the words supplied by the translators. "You, O God, are in the depths as well as in the heights, You are everything in every place, You are All in All."

9, 10. *If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Your hand lead me.* "I cannot go anywhere except You enable me to go."

10, 11. *And Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.* "There is no escaping that way, for the night shall be transformed into light, and I shall be as clearly perceived in the darkness as in the daylight."

12. *Yes, the darkness hides not from You.* "It hides from eyes which are but mortal, but You are pure Spirit and You discern not through the impinging of light upon the retina of the eye."

12. *But the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to You.* Now the Psalmist goes back to the very foundation and origin of his being.

13. *For You have possessed my reins.* "You are within the secret portions of my bodily frame."

13, 14. *You have covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* Therefore Galen, the oldest and the best-known of the ancient surgeons, was known to say that an undevout anatomist must be mad, as another said that an undevout astronomer was mad, for there is such a marvelous display of skill and wisdom, delicacy and force in the making of a man, that we may, each one, say, "I will praise You; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

14-16. *Marvelous are Your works; and that my soul knows right well. My substance was not hid from You, when I was made in secret, and curiously worked in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect and in Your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.* Still he dwells upon his birth and all that went before it—and he did well to speak of those marvels. We are too apt to forget God's goodness to us in our infant days, but we should remember that we come not into this world without a Creator and in that Creator we find a Friend, the best we have ever had, the best we can ever have! Oh, for Grace never to wish to stray away from Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being!

17. *How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!* How often God has thought of each one of us! Remember that if you were the only man in all the world, He would not think more of you than He does now that you are only one of myriads of myriads! The infinite mind of God is not divided by the multiplicity of the objects brought before it, but His whole mind goes forth to contemplate each individual. What deep thoughts, what bright thoughts, what faithful thoughts God has had concerning us! "How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!"

18. *If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with You.* "Whether I sleep or wake, You are with me, but, better still, I am with You! Before I fell asleep, I put my soul into Your hands. And when I awoke, I found it there."

19. *Surely You will slay the wicked, O God.* It cannot be that God, who sees everything, will forever endure the wickedness of men. It cannot be that He will suffer all crime and villainy and blasphemy to escape with impunity! "Surely You will slay the wicked, O God."

19. *Depart from me therefore, you bloody men.* "I do not want to be with you, or to have you with me, in the day when God metes out vengeance upon the ungodly."

20-22. *For they speak against You wickedly and Your enemies take Your name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD that hate You? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them my enemies.* We are bound to love our enemies, but we are not bound to love God's enemies. We are to wish them, as enemies, a complete overthrow, but to wish them, as men, a gracious conversion, that they may obtain God's pardon and become His friends, followers and servants.

23. *Search me, O God.* Is it not amazing that what the Psalmist started with as a doctrine, now becomes a prayer? Before, he said, "O Lord, You have searched me, and known me." Now he cries, "Search me, O God!

23. *And know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts.* Every attribute of God works for the good of those who trust Him. If you are a Believer, you may ask for His infinite power to protect you and His infinite knowledge to search you.

24. *And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* May God first make that our prayer and then graciously hear it, for His great name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—182, 190, 139 (SONG I).

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

"TAKE HEED, BRETHREN" NO. 2552

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 16, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 23, 1884.

"Take heed, brethren, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."
Hebrews 3:12.

THIS message is not addressed to strangers far away, but to "brethren." Paul wrote it to the Hebrews, who were his brethren according to the flesh. It was kind of him to call them by that name. He also writes it to all of us who are Believers in Christ, and we ought to receive his word with all the greater intensity of attention because he writes to us as his brethren. The term applies to all who are Brothers and Sisters in Christ—really so—those who are quickened by the one Spirit, made children of the one Father and going to the one heavenly Home. The Apostle would not have us begrudge this title to any genuine member of our Lord Jesus Christ's true Church. It is not for us to read men's hearts—we have not the Lamb's Book of Life in our possession, so we cannot discover whether such-and-such a man's name is really written in it, or not, but, in the judgment of Christian charity, all those who have joined themselves to Christ's Church are our brethren—and the more we recognize that relationship, the better. To all of you, therefore, who bear the Christian name, this message comes with power, "Take heed, brethren, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

There are other persons who are associated with us in our congregations who do not profess, as yet, to have passed from death unto life, although they come up with us to the House of the Lord. They swell the chorus of our praise, they bow their heads with us in prayer, they are, in many respects, our fellow worshippers and they have, apparently, a warm heart towards good things, though not yet fully one with us in the highest *spiritual* sense. We will not exclude them from this message of the Apostle, for they are our brethren as men, even if they are not our brethren as Christians, and the Word of God comes to them as well as to us who are avowedly on the Lord's side, "Take heed, brethren, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief."

You see, then, that we are, all of us, called upon to "take heed." The word means that we are to be careful, to be watchful. True religion is not

a thing that can be acquired by carelessness or neglect—we must take heed or we shall never be found in the narrow way. You may go to Hell heedlessly, but you cannot so go to Heaven. Many stumble into the bottomless Pit with their eyes shut, but no man ever yet entered into Heaven by a leap in the dark. "Take heed, brethren." If ever there was a matter that needed all your thought, all your prudence and all your care, it is the matter of your soul's salvation. If you trifle with anything, let it be with your wealth, or with your health, but certainly not with your eternal interests. I recommend all men to take heed to everything that has to do with this life, as well as with that which is to come, for in the little the great may be concealed—and the neglect of our estate may end in mischief to our immortal spirit. Certainly, the neglect of the body might lead to great injury to the soul, but if ever neglect deserves condemnation, it is when it concerns our higher nature! If we do not carefully see to it, that which is our greatest glory may become our most tremendous curse.

Brothers and Sisters, the watchword for every one of us is, "Take heed." You are an old Christian, but "take heed." You are a minister of the Gospel and there are many who look up to you with veneration—"take heed." You have learned the Doctrines of Grace and you know them well—there is little that any human being can teach you, for you have been well instructed in the things of the Kingdom of God—but still, "take heed." Yes, and if you were so near to Heaven that you could hear the songs within, I would still whisper in your ear, "Take heed." Horses fall most often at the bottom of the hill when we think that we need not hold them up any longer. And there is no condition in life which is more dangerous than that feeling of perfect security which precludes watchfulness and care. He who is quite sure of his strength to resist temptation may be also equally certain of his weakness in the hour of trial. God grant us Grace, whatever sort of "brethren" we may be, to listen to the admonition of the Apostle, "Take heed."

Paul means not only take heed for yourself—though that is the first duty of each one of us, for every man must bear his own burden and it becomes every prudent man to look well to the matter of his own salvation—but the Apostle says, "Take heed, brethren, lest there is *in any of you* an evil heart of unbelief." You are to watch over your brethren, to exhort one another daily, especially you who are officers of the Church, or who are elderly and experienced. Be upon the watch lest any of your brethren in the Church should gradually backslide, or lest any in the congregation should harden into a condition of settled unbelief and perish in their sin. He who bids you take heed to yourself would not have you settle down into a selfish care for yourself, alone, lest you should become like Cain who even dared to say to the Lord, Himself, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Nothing can be more horrible than the state of mind of a man whose talk is like that of Cain, who slew his brother. "Take heed," therefore, you who are in the Church of God, not only to yourselves, but to those who are round about you, especially to such as are of your own family!

The text naturally divides itself into an exhortation. "Take heed, brethren"—a warning—"lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." And a description of the danger which would follow from a neglect of this warning—"in departing from the living God." Lay up those three things in your memory and heart and may God cause them to work there for the effectual blessing of your spiritual life.

I purpose, as I may be helped of God's Spirit, to take the text and apply it to the three classes of persons whom I indicated at the outset of my discourse—first, *to the inner Church,* the true elect, redeemed, regenerated, called, sanctified people of God. The message of the text is for you, my Brothers and Sisters! Secondly, *to the visible Church,* to all who are, I trust, as truly saved and regenerated as the first class are, but yet I have a fear that there is a mixture in the nominal Church—that there is chaff mingled with the wheat upon Christ's floor and bad fish caught in the Gospel net along with the good ones. To all these persons I speak with great earnestness and say, "Take heed, brethren." Then I am going to take *the whole congregation* and address the message of the text to all without exception—"Take heed, brethren, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

I. First, then, TO THE INNER CHURCH, God's own chosen people—to you who are really His—the Apostle says, "Take heed, brethren." If you dare to put yourself among that privileged company and say, "Yes, by God's Holy Spirit I have been quickened, renewed, sealed, preserved—and I have the witness of the Spirit, Himself, within my own spirit, that I am, indeed, born of God—then to you comes the Apostolic watchword, "Take heed."

For, first, dear Friend, *even you may fall into unbelief.* Are you not aware of that fact? Have you not been already tormented with it? I daresay, like myself, you did, at one time, indulge the idea that old Incredulity would soon die. You took him by the heels and you put him in the stocks and said to yourself, "He will never trouble me again! I shall never doubt the promise of God, anymore, as long as I live. I have had such a wonderful experience of God's faithfulness—He has been so exceedingly gracious to me that I cannot doubt Him any more." You remember how Mr. Bunyan says, in *The Holy War,* that, after the enemies of King Shaddai had been sentenced to death, "One of the prisoners, Incredulity by name, in the interim between the sentence and time of execution, broke prison, made his escape and got out of the town of Mansoul and lay lurking in such places and holds as he might, until he should again have opportunity to do the town of Mansoul a mischief for their thus handling of him as they did."

Incredulity will work his wicked will upon you if he can and you must always remember that it is possible, even, for *you* to fall into unbelief—you who are rejoicing, you who have hung out all your flags and are keeping high festival—oh, tell it not in Gath! Yes, even *you* may yet be found doubting your God! May the Lord grant that you may be delivered from this evil! But it is only Almighty Grace which can keep you with

faith pure and simple and free from any tincture of doubt and unbelief. Pressure of circumstances may drive you into an unbelieving state of mind. Depression of soul, due to physical causes, may do it—the spirit often truly is willing and believing, but the flesh is weak—and it may pull you down. Association with doubters may have a similar effect. Conflict for the Truth of God may make you familiar with the poisoned arrows of skeptics and, in attempting to do them good, you may imbibe mischief from them. The Lord will preserve you from the positive, stark, black Egyptian darkness of unbelief, but there are other grades and degrees of it which you may have to endure. It is bad for a Christian to have *any* mixture of darkness with his light and to have *any* measure of doubt mingled with his faith. Yet it may be so and, therefore, the Spirit of God says to the people of God, "Take heed, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

Note, next, that *in proportion as unbelief gets into your heart, you will begin to depart from the living God.* I am not speaking, now, of open glaring sin—you have not fallen into that and I pray God that you never may. But, Beloved, we may have all the decencies of morality, all the proprieties of Christian conduct and yet we may be, all the while, "departing from the living God." The moment we begin to trust in man and to make flesh our arm, we have, to that extent, forgotten Jehovah and departed from the living God. The moment our heart's deepest affections twine about the dearest creature—be it husband, or wife, or child—we are, to that degree, "departing from the living God." To the true Believer, in his best estate, the sweetest line that he can ever sing is that which we sang just now—

"Yes, mine own God is He."

That is the circle which surrounds all his joy! It is the center of his soul's highest delight. He has God for his very own! On his God he relies and towards Him he sends out the full streams of his earnest affection. Remember what the Lord wrote by the pen of the Prophet Jeremiah—*"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."

Brothers and Sisters, it is easy to depart from the living God spiritually—gradually to lose that serene and heavenly frame which is our highest privilege, to forget Him who ought to always be before our eyes as the chief factor in our entire life, the great All-in-All, compared with whom everything else is but as a dream, a fleeting shadow. I bear my witness that to walk with the living God is life—but to get away from Him is death! And that in proportion as we begin to depart and put a distance

between ourselves and the great Invisible—in that proportion our life ebbs away and we get to be sickly and scarcely alive! Then doubts arise as to whether we are the people of God at all—and it is sad that such a question as that should ever be possible! We ought to live like the angel whom Milton pictures as living in the sun—in the very center of the orb of light—so near to God that we do not merely *sometimes* enjoy His Presence, but that in Him we live altogether and never depart from Him!

I remember a minister calling upon a poor old saint and before coming away he said he hoped that the Divine Father would constantly visit the sick man. But he replied, "O Sir, I do not want you to ask that the Father should merely visit me, for by these many months together He has been living with me and I have been living in Him." So may it be with each one of you, my Brothers and Sisters! And that it may be so, give attention to the message of the text, "Take heed, brethren, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing"—in any measure or degree—"from the living God."

"But," you say, "why should we take such heed about that matter? We are Believers and, therefore, we are saved." Are you Believers? They who can trifle with heavenly things are not true Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if ever it becomes a thing of small importance to you whether you dwell with the living God, or not, the question may well arise in your heart, "Am I truly a Believer in Jesus Christ with the faith of God's elect—the faith that really saves the soul?"

But, my Brothers and Sisters, if you do not continue steadfast and firm in your faith in its simplicity—if your evil heart of unbelief begins to prevail and you are turned aside from your confidence in Christ, and so begin to get away from God—*you will be great losers thereby* even if you do manage to get to Heaven, "saved, yet so as by fire." For, first, you will lose your joy. That is no small thing. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." The joy of the Lord is one of the means by which you are to be made useful. The joy of the Lord sweetens trial, lightens care and turns service into delight. But if you lose that joy, you are as one who travels alone in the dark and who stumbles and falls. I pray you, do not depart from the living God in any degree, for if you do so, your joy will begin to get clouded, the brightness and the warmth of it will be taken from you—and you will become faint-hearted, trembling, timorous and sad. If the evil heart of unbelief shall prevail against you, depend upon it, you will lose your joy.

Then you may be certain, also, that you will lose your assurance. Full assurance cannot exist with unholiness. One has well said, "If your assurance does not make you leave off sinning, your sinning will make you leave off enjoying assurance." And I am sure that it is so. If we begin to look to second causes and do not trust in God, we shall then put forth our hand to some one sin or another. And when we do that, we cannot be certain that we are children of God at all! That man who feels sure of his safety and yet can play with sin and find pleasure in it, may be assured of his own damnation! I remember, in my boyhood, one who never talked

so religiously as when he was the worse for drink. And in public, before ungodly men, he used to boast of his full assurance of salvation—when he was much too far gone to be assured that he would get home in safety that night! That kind of conduct is atrocious and no one would excuse it for a moment! We know that men who talk so only proclaim their own shame to their own eternal disgrace. But do not let any of us indulge even in a measure of that kind of sin. That evil heart of unbelief will not only lead us away from a holy walk with God, but it will also take from us our assurance if it is an assurance that is worth having.

Then, next, it will take from us our fruitfulness. Dear child of God, I am sure that you do not wish to live here without doing good to others. But how can you do good if you are not, yourself, good? You cannot bring forth fruit unto holiness unless you are watered with the dew of Heaven and the sunlight of God shines upon you. And you will not have either of those blessings if you live carelessly and if you fall into an unbelieving state of mind and get away from contact with the ever-living God. If any of you have tried this kind of life, you must have become painfully aware what it is to have all the sap and juice, out of which the clusters ought to come, dried up within the tree and everything turned to barrenness because you have yourself departed from God!

These are all serious losses to a child of God. It is no light matter for you to lose joy, assurance and fruitfulness. But the evil heart of unbelief will cause you, also, to lose purity. There is a delicate bloom upon the fruit that grows in Christ's garden, where He, as the Gardener, cultivates it with tender care. But sin comes and rubs away that bloom and spoils the fruit. If you and I fall into sin, we shall have to weep bitterly over it. We shall not be able to enjoy the high privilege which belongs to those who keep their garments unspotted from the world. Of these the Savior says, "They shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy." I believe that, of all fortes of spiritual loss, one of the worst is to lose tenderness of conscience, quickness of apprehension when sin is near—to lose a sense of cleanness of heart and of sanctification by the Spirit of God. When those are gone, we are something like Adam when he lost Paradise, and we turn our faces back again toward that purity and cry to the Lord to restore it, as we moan rather than sing—

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?"

Take care that you do not lose it, for it will hardly be likely to be restored to you in the same degree as you had it at the first.

The child of God who wanders away also loses peace and many other attainments of the spiritual life. He is like a boy who is sent down from the top of the class—it may take him a long time to get up again. Or he is like the soldier who has risen from the ranks, but who has misbehaved himself and is, therefore, made a Private again. He who once could lead the people of God has to be very thankful that he is permitted to go into the rear rank and to follow where others lead. He who could talk for God boldly now has to sing very small and let others speak. He who used to

encourage others, now needs to be encouraged, himself. He was once strong in faith and a mighty man of valor, but now he has to use Mr. Ready-to-Halt's crutches and to go along with the feeble ones among the pilgrims because an evil heart of unbelief has made him depart from the living God!

This brings, of course, a loss of influence with the people of God and with worldlings, too, for when a man has injured his reputation, it is not soon repaired. If he has slipped and fallen, brethren weep over him and love him, and seek to restore him, but they do not trust him as they used to do. They are some little while before they dare to follow where he leads the way. I have seen a man whose judgment was like that of Solomon, whose position in the midst of his brethren was that of a hero inciting them to daring deeds—but he has fallen and all Israel has wept over him! Perhaps there has been no shameful sin, but yet there has been an evident decline in spirituality and in force and power. The Lord has left him and great Samson, though he shakes himself as before, is fast bound in chains and his eyes have been put out. Happy will he be if, at some future day, when the locks of his hair have grown back, he shall be able to pull down the temple of the Philistine lords upon them. But so far as his brethren are concerned, he will have to be the object of loving pity rather than of joyful confidence.

Do not tell me, then, that you do not lose anything by getting into a state of unbelief and departing from God, for, in addition to all this, such a child of God loses power in prayer. It is "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man" that "avails much." Our Lord Jesus told His disciples, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." But disobedient children will find that the Father will turn a deaf ear to their supplication. "No," He will say, "you would not listen to Me—neither will I listen to you," for God has a way of walking contrary to them that walk contrary to Him.

Then there very often follows at the back of that, chastisements, heavy and multiplied. Take heed, my Brothers and Sisters, as you remember the history of David. What a blessed life, what a glorious life, is that of David until the unhappy day when kings went forth to battle, but the king of Israel went not! He tarried in inglorious ease at home and, as he walked upon the top of his palace, he saw that which tempted him to evil desire. To that ill desire he fell a prey and the man after God's own heart became an adulterer and a murderer! Alas! Alas! All the rest of his life he travels on toward Heaven with broken bones and sorrowful spirit. At every step he limps—his prayers are sighs, his Psalms lack the jubilant notes that once made them ascend joyously unto the Lord! He is still a true man of God and, in his deep repentance, he becomes a pattern to us all in repenting of sin, but the brave joyous David is not there! And at the last, though he pleads the Covenant, he has to say, "Although my house is not so with God." There was a great mass of heart-break packed away in those few words, more than we need to explain just now.

What a dreadful family David had! None of us have had a family 1ike his—that was his chastisement—his own children! What a mercy it was for him that Sovereign Grace did not cast him away, for after he had uttered that deep bass note, "Although my house is not so with God," then came the sweet assurance of faith, "Yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in al1 things, and sure, although He make it not to grow." There came in again the note of deep sorrow mingled with his holy faith in God. O Brothers and Sisters, I have heard men say that a broken leg, when it is mended, is sometimes stronger than it was before. It may be so, but I am not going to break my leg to try the experiment! I know one who says that his arm was broken when he was a boy and that he believes it is stronger than the other one. So it may be, but I will not break my arm if I can help it! May the Lord rather keep me in His hands lest I dash my foot against a stone! There is a great deal of experience which I hope you will never have—and that is the kind of experience which comes of an evil heart of unbelief—in departing from the living God. Take heed that you never come to know that sorrow!

II. Now, in the second place, and very briefly, I want to apply my text TO ALL IN THE VISIBLE CHURCH, whether they are, indeed, God's people or not. If you profess to belong to Christ, it is enough for my present purpose. "Take heed," I pray you, professing Christians, "lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

For, first, many *professors have had an evil heart.* It is not every Church member who has a new heart and a right spirit. Judas was in the Church, but he had an evil heart and was a devil. It may be so with me, my Brothers and Sisters, or with you. There are some in the Church who have no real faith in Christ. Their very heart is crammed full of unbelief, though they pretend that they have believed in Christ. I know that it is so—we cannot help observing that there are unbelievers who bear the name of Christians!

Many of these have turned aside. To our sorrow, we have lived to see it in far too many cases. They were members of Churches, but they grew weary of the good way. Nothing pleased them. The preacher who used to charm them lost all his power over them. Prayer Meetings became dull and they would rather not have anything at all to do with religion. We have known some go back to the world for no reason that they dared even to tell themselves—it was because of the fickleness of their unregenerate spirits. We have seen this happen to others when they have been strongly tempted. Satan knew their particular weakness and he assailed them there. How many professors have given way to strong drink! They would have a little and who could condemn them? But when they began by taking a little, they soon took what was not little to others—and it turned out, by-and-by, not to be little to themselves—and he who should have been a pattern of self-denial to the people of God has become a victim of intoxication!

Others have fallen through the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. A man has been tempted to get gain by dishonesty.

At first the bribe did not affect him—but it was doubled, or tripled—and then he fell. Many more have we seen very gradually turning aside. It was almost impossible to tell exactly when they left the line of strict integrity. It was only by a hair's breadth that they turned aside, at first, but afterwards their apostasy was visible to all. Some have been frost-bitten—they have grown lukewarm and then, at last, ice-cold—and we have lost them. Some professors have been turned aside by pride. They were too rich to join with any but a *"respectable"* worldly church, or they were so learned—so *conceited* is the right word—that the plain Gospel was too inferior an article for their profound minds! Some, alas—and I fear, very many—have turned aside through poverty. We meet with cases where the visitor in the lowest haunts of degradation says that he has come across a woman in the depths of penury and with scarcely rags enough to cover her, yet she has produced a communion ticket, for in better days she was a member of the Church, but she could not get clothes quite good enough, as she thought. She fancied that she would be looked down upon if she came when poor—and so she ceased to attend the means of Grace and, by-and-by, gave up everything like a profession of religion. Oh, if there are any members of the Church of that sort, here, I pray you, if you ever do become very poor, do not go away from us because of that! And if your clothes should be all rags, I am sure that none of us will despise you! Or if there should be any who do so, I will bear the responsibility of *despising them*—but do not ever stay away from the House of God, or the company of your Christian Brothers and Sisters because of poverty!

Why, it seems to me that the less you have of earthly good things to comfort you, the more you need of Divine treasure and the companionship of Christ! And you should rather seek the society of your friends in Christ than for a moment to shun it. Yet it has been so and, therefore, I put it to all here who profess to be followers of Christ—"Take heed, brethren, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

III. Now I have only a very few minutes left in which to apply my text TO THOSE WHO ARE SIMPLY IN THE CONGREGATION.

There is a large number of you who come to worship with us who are only camp-followers. You are not in the regular regiments of the Lord's Army, yet you cling to us and we cannot help regarding you with much affection as "brethren" so far as you allow that brotherhood to be true. We wish that you would make it truer, still, but we do not want any of you to perish because of your unbelief. Remember, dear Friends, that *your unbelief is an affair of your heart.* It is not an evil head of unbelief, but, "an evil *heart* of unbelief" of which the Apostle speaks. And that is what is wrong with you. You know that you believe everything that is in the Bible. You look with horror upon any heretical doctrine. You love to hear the Gospel and yet you have not received it for yourselves. I want you to give my Lord credit to think Him no liar, but a true Savior. And if He is such, then come and trust Him! You are fit to come to Him, for

your fitness lies in your *need* of Him, and I am sure you need Him. Come and do Him this act of justice—trust Him! He is so strong, so true, so tender, that if you will but commit your soul to Him, He will take care of it. If you will bring your sins to Him, He will wash them away. If you will bring your weakness to Him, He will strengthen you. If you will really come to Him, He will take you as you are at this moment, for He never cast out one who came to Him—it is not like He—He could not do it! It is no more possible for Christ to reject a sinner who trusts Him than it is for God to lie! It is contrary to the Nature of God and He cannot do what is contrary to Himself!

Come, then, and do not depart from the living God by an evil heart of unbelief. Nothing will bring you near to God but believing—and nothing can shut you out from God and from the life and light and liberty that there is in God in Christ Jesus—but your unbelief. Only trust Him! That is the whole of the matter. I pray God, of His infinite mercy, to make you "take heed, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief," which shall get such mastery over you that you shall depart, not only from the living God, but even from the ways of morality, till God shall say to you, at the last, "Depart, you cursed. You always were departing, keep on departing."

And this shall be the punishment of your sin—you shall reap it fully developed, for Hell is sin full grown! God save us from the baby, which is sin, that we may not know the man, which is Hell! God save us from the seed, which is sin, that we may not know the harvest, which is Hell! God save us from the spark, which is sin, that we may not know the conflagration, which is eternal damnation! God save and bless you, dear Friends, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 3:1-16.

Verse 1. ***T****herefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.* Oh, that He had more consideration at our hands! Consider Him—you cannot know all His excellence, all His value to you, unless He is the subject of your constant meditation. Consider Him—think of His Nature, His offices, His work, His promises, His relation to you. "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.

2. *Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.* See how our Lord Jesus Christ condescended to be appointed of the Father. In coming as a Mediator, taking upon Himself our humanity, He "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a Servant." And being found in fashion as a Servant, we find that He was faithful—to every jot and tittle, He carried out His charge.

3. *For this Man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who has built the house has more honor than the house.* And

Moses was but one stone in the house. Though in a certain sense he was a servant in it, yet in another and, for him, a happier sense, he was only a stone in the house which the Lord Jesus Christ had built. Let us think of our Lord as the Architect and Builder of His own Church—and let our hearts count Him worthy of more glory than Moses—let us give Him glory in the highest. However highly a Jew may think of Moses—and he ought to think highly of him, and so ought we—yet infinitely higher than Moses must ever rise the Incarnate Son of God!

4. *For every house is built by some.* By someone or other.

4. *But He that built all things is God.* And Christ is God and He is the Builder of all things in the spiritual realm—yes, and in the natural kingdom, too, for, "without Him was not anything made that was made." So He is to have eternal honor and glory as the one great Master-Builder.

5, 6. *And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firmly unto the end.* You see, then, that the Apostle had first made a distinction between Christ and Moses on the ground of the builder being greater than the house he builds. Now, in the second place, He shows Christ's superiority to Moses on the ground that a son in his own house is greater than a servant in the house of his master. How sweetly he introduces the Truth of God that *we* are the house of Christ! Do we realize that the Lord Jesus Christ dwells in the midst of us? How clean we ought to be, how holy, how heavenly! How we should seek to rise above earth and keep ourselves reserved for the Crucified! In this house, no rival should be permitted ever to dwell—the great Lord should have every chamber of it entirely to Himself! Oh, that He may take His rest within our hearts as His holy habitation! And may there be nothing in our church life that shall grieve the Son of God and cause Him, even for a moment, to be withdrawn from us—"whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firmly unto the end." Perseverance—final perseverance—is the test of election! He whom God Has chosen holds on and holds out even to the end, while temporary professors make only a fair show in the flesh, but, by-and-by, their faith vanishes.

7. *Therefore.* Now comes a long parenthesis.

7-11. (*As the Holy Spirit says, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known My ways. So I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest*). Oh, that none of us, as professors of the faith of Christ, may be like Israel in the wilderness! I fear there is too much likeness—God grant that it may be carried no further! May we hear the voice of God as they did *not* hear it, for their ears were dull of hearing! May we never harden our hearts as they did, for they kicked against the command of God and rebelled against the thunders of

Sinai! May God grant that we may never test Him, as they did, when they were continually proposing to God to do other than He willed to do—something for their gratification which would not have been right and which, therefore, He did not do! Oh, that we might never grieve Him as they did, for they grieved Him forty years! He bore with them and yet they bored Him. He forgave and overlooked their errors only to be provoked by the repetition of them, for they would not know what God made very plain. His works were such that the wayfaring men might have read them, but they did not know God's ways and, at last, He banished them from all participation in His rest. Their carcasses fell in the wilderness and they entered not into the land of promise. "Therefore"—

12, 13. *Take heed, brethren, lest there is in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* Watch over each other as well as over yourselves. Take heed lest sin hardens you before you are aware of it! Even while you fancy that you have wiped it out by repentance, petrifaction will remain upon your heart "through the deceitfulness of sin."

14-16. *For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; while it is said, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.* Not all, for there were two faithful ones. See how the Spirit of God gathers up the fragments that remain! If there are but two faithful ones out of millions, He knows it and He records it.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—42 (VERSION I), 512, 621.

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

THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST NO. 2553

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 23, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER. 26 1884.

"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. Philippians 3:18, 19.

IT would seem, dear Friends, that there have been trials and difficulties connected with the Church of Christ in every age. We dream that our temptations are worse than those of our fathers, but they are not. We fancy that the Church is subject to worse diseases than in her early days, but it is not so. Paul had to complain that even in the Church at Philippi, which was about as good as any, and in some respects much better than most of the Churches, there were false teachers, and false-living men, who professed to be followers of Christ, but who were, in fact, the worst enemies of the Cross of Christ. One thing I wish and that is that, instead of brooding over our present difficulties, we would take them to the Lord in prayer and faith—and so triumph over them. But, at the same time, I wish that we had the same tenderness of heart for the Glory of God which was felt by the Apostle. That we were as sensitive as he was of anything that reflected upon the Divine honor, as jealous as he was, even to tears, lest any who professed to be the friends of the Cross should, by their lives, turn out to be its worst enemies. Oh, for more of Paul's zeal for God as the great motive power of our life, so that we might feel that it mattered little how anything else went so long as the Grace of Christ triumphed, men were saved and God's name was glorified! The Lord bring us to that state of mind! We shall then feel the sins of today even more acutely than we do at present—and we shall the more confidently trust in God as we seek to overcome them.

I am not going to confine the text to its immediate connection with the church at Philippi, but I shall take it on a somewhat larger scale. Is it not startling to read of, "enemies of the Cross of Christ"? One would naturally have supposed that a remedy so wondrous and so effectual as the Atonement would have been gladly received by souls sick unto death with sin. It might have been predicted by any man who judged, concern-

ing the future, that no sooner would the Son of God descend from Heaven to earth—and die to put away human sin—than men would come flocking by millions to adore Him—and would feel as if they could not give Him a sufficiently hearty welcome! Yes, but the fact that there ever was a Cross shows how depraved is the human heart, how great the Fall that needed such a Sacrifice, how deep the depravity that committed such a murder as that of Calvary! Man, you are beside yourself, indeed, and gone back out of the way and, therefore, it is not far-fetched that you should be an enemy of the Cross of Christ! Yet it seems very startling to me as I picture the scene—a bleeding Christ and enemies gathered about the Cross whereon He dies for them! Then, a weeping Apostle warning the Church of God—the messenger of Christ in tears as he delivers the warning—yet Christ's enemies still unmoved, perhaps pretending to be His friends, but remaining hostile to Him all the while. It is a strange conglomerate of amazing things—a Savior full of love and man full of hate—a preacher with a heart so broken that he rather weeps than preaches, and a congregation with hearts so hard that, though he has told them the Truth of God again and again, they do not regard it!

Let that striking mixture of opposing elements stand before you, now, while I begin to expound the text.

I. First, let us enquire, WHAT IS THIS CROSS OF CHRIST to which some men are sadly said to be enemies?

Of course, it *is not the material cross.* It is not anything made in the shape of the cross. There are some who can fall down and adore a cross of wood, or stone, or gold, but I cannot conceive of a greater wounding of the heart of Christ than to pay reverence to anything in the shape of a cross, or to bow before a crucifix! I think the Savior must say, "What? What? Am I the Son of God and do they make even *Me* into an idol? I who have died to redeem men from their idolatries, am I, Myself, taken and carved, and chiseled, and molten, and set up as an image to be worshipped by the sons of men?" When God says, "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," it is a strange fantasy of human guilt that men should say, "We will even take the image of the Son of God, or some ghastly counterfeit that purports to be His image, and will bow down and worship it, as if to make the Christ of God an accomplice in an act of rebellion against the commandment of the holy Law." No, it is not the material cross to which Paul alludes—we have nothing to do with those outward symbols! We might have used them much more, but they have been so perverted to idolatry that some of us almost shudder at the very sight of them!

What is the Cross of Christ, then? Well, first, it is that doctrine which is the center of His holy religion, *the Doctrine of the Atonement.* By the Cross we mean that the Son of God did actually and literally die, nailed

to a Roman gibbet as a malefactor—numbered with the transgressors—doing this because He had, of His own voluntary will, taken upon Himself the sin of His people and, being found with that sin upon Him, He must expiate it by His death. He must lay down His life, "the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God." As it is written, "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Now, they who oppose this doctrine are "the enemies of the Cross of Christ, and they who accept this Atonement and repose their entire confidence upon it, are the friends of the Cross of Christ. They think of that Sacrifice on Calvary with reverence linked with love. They never know how sufficiently to speak of it with adoring gratitude that ever such a Victim should have been presented—the Father, Himself, giving Him—and that such a Victim should ever have been slain, the Lord resigning His life for us! Oh, it is amazing and more than amazing—a miracle that carries every other miracle within itself—greater and more Divine than all the deeds whereof poets have sung, even though they are the deeds of God, Himself, for in this He has excelled Himself—

"God, in the Person of His Son,
Has all His mightiest works outdone."

They are "the enemies of the Cross of Christ" who try to belittle this great Atonement and to make it out to be a very small affair, next to nothing in importance. As I have often said of some preachers, they teach that Jesus Christ did something or other, which in some way or other, is in some measure or other connected with our salvation. We do not teach any such hazy ideas as that! We say that He laid down His life for the sheep and that for those sheep He has made a perfect, complete and effectual Redemption by which He has delivered them from the wrath to come. Blessed is he who rejoices in that Doctrine of the Cross of Christ!

But by the Cross is sometimes meant, in Scripture, *the Gospel which is the outflow of that central doctrine.* And what is that Gospel? Why, that, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." And that, "He has committed unto us the word of reconciliation," which word of reconciliation is this, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." This is the Gospel which we proclaim—"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." As we preach this Gospel to the sons of men, we hear Christ crying to them through us, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." It is a promise of free, instantaneous, perfect, irreversible, everlasting pardon to all who will believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, for He is—mark this word—"the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him."

Other salvation there is none than that which lies in His hands, but He has opened His hands upon the Cross and to-day He supplies the needs of every sinner who comes and trusts Him. He who quarrels with that Doctrine is an enemy of the Cross of Christ! Whether he makes Baptism to be the *modus* of salvation, or sets up any rite or ceremony whatever, whether Divinely-appointed or humanly-invented, he is an enemy of the Cross of Christ! Circumcision was venerable, it pertained to the fathers and was the seal of the ancient Covenant—but even *it* became an evil thing when the false teachers would have had the Gentile converts to be circumcised that they might escape from bearing the Cross of Christ—and might trust in circumcision instead of in Christ, alone! "For," says Paul, "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." The Doctrine of Justification by Faith is the Gospel—I know no other, and I wish to know no other. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses." But, alas, there are still many who are enemies of that Doctrine, and so are, "enemies of the Cross of Christ."

The Cross of Christ is sometimes put in Scripture for *the life which is the result of faith in Christ.* What kind of life should that be? Well, first, a life of self-denial. No man who is the friend of the Cross of Christ will give license to his passions, or indulgence to his appetites. If he does so, he proves that he is the enemy of the Cross of Christ. No man will seek honor for himself who has known that Christ has bought him with His blood. He will not, he cannot, he dare not live for himself, either in the accumulating of wealth, or the getting of fame, or the enjoyment of pleasure. His first, chief, master thought is, "For Jesus Christ all things—all things in Him, and for Him, and to Him, seeing that He has redeemed us with His precious blood." They who shirk His service, who take no interest in holy enterprises, who just try to live to themselves—your eaters and your drinkers, your hoarders and your men and women who are always adorning the body, but never consecrating their souls to God—these are they who are "the enemies of the Cross of Christ." It galls their shoulders and they will not bear it, so they turn aside to ways of their own.

II. Now, secondly, WHY ARE MEN ENEMIES OF THIS CROSS OF CHRIST?

Frankly, I think that *some do not* know *why they are.* "Let me tell you the Gospel," says a kind friend. "I do not want to hear it." "Here is a little book which has been very useful to many." "I do not want your books." Do you not know the liberal-minded people that we have in the world now? When they speak, or when they write, it is all about charity and liberality—they hate bigots! Dear, dear, dear, is it not amazing that they do not hate themselves because they will not tolerate the very notion of

true religion? "Why!" says one, "that Book is not true." Did you ever read it? "No." I thought so. We almost always find that the men who reject the New Testament never read it through and never mean to do so. Nicodemus wisely asked, "Does our Law judge any man before it hears him?" Our lawless ones do! And there are multitudes of men who ought to think themselves as mean as dirt because they never gave Christ a hearing—yet they thrust Him from them. "Oh!" says one, "I should never go inside any of those canting Methodist places." No, you are such a wonderful man that you think you can see through a stone wall and judge of what goes on inside—you do not need to be taught because you imagine you already know everything! I believe that in London there is a vast amount of prejudice against true religion which is based upon nothing at all. The people do not know what the Gospel is and, in part, this is our hope, for if we can but bring the blessed Truth of Christ to bear upon some of these men, it will be like plowing up virgin soil in the western states of America—we may hope to reap a glorious harvest. God grant that we may!

But there are some who are "enemies of the Cross of Christ" for reasons which they would not like to confess. Some, *because the Cross of Christ hurts their pride.* Why should they need to be pardoned? They have done nothing amiss—they are as good as most people and a great deal better than many! You speak to one of them and he says, "Do not talk to me as if you thought I was going to be lost. I do not know anybody who can find fault with me. I really think that I am an example to others." Just so and, therefore, of course you hate the Cross of Christ! No man who is well likes medicine—how we laugh at the doctors when we feel all right! What jests we make about their calling! It is only when we begin to feel strange that we send for a medical man. And it is just so with men spiritually—as long as they are whole, they need not the Great Physician. While they think they are righteous, they reject the righteousness of Christ.

Others, too, abhor the Cross of Christ *because the Gospel is so simple.* They belong to a club and they take in a Quarterly Review. And though they do not know very much about any one thing, yet they know a little about a great many things. They just get a smattering of various kinds of knowledge and they think they are wonderfully clever. Do you not notice the development of their foreheads? You cannot expect that *they* would have anything to do with the Gospel that would suit a servant girl! The religion that fits Jack, Tom and Harry is not grand enough for them. Why, they actually had a distant relative who was connected with a Baronet, so of course we cannot expect such gentlemen as they are to be saved simply by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ! The Gospel is too plain, too easy, for them. O Sirs, would you like to have it made difficult, that all the poor ignorant people in the world might perish just to please you? Let me remind you that such a man as Sir Isaac Newton, who had

one of the greatest of all human minds, gloried in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and felt it all too great for him. And in our days, such a truly scientific man as Faraday bowed meekly before the Divine Savior and looked up and found everything in Him. Yet some foolish people think they know better than the eternal God so they hate the Cross of Christ. Self-conceit is the reason of much of the opposition of men to Christ.

Besides, although the Cross of Christ is lifted high, as the one hope for guilty sinners, *it is the most terribly holy thing beneath the cope of Heaven.* That Cross, blood red from His dear wounds, frightens away sin, though it draws sinners near itself. That Christ of God, making Atonement with bloody sweat, pierced hands and anguished cry of, "Why have You forsaken Me?" is the most powerful preacher of godly living whose voice was ever heard among the sons of men! Not only do sins acknowledged to be black by society in general flee from the light of the Cross, but even secret sins fly before the blaze of God's mingled vengeance and love upon the accursed tree! The Cross is the birthplace of Puritans—the men who must be clean, who will not touch your filthy world and its amusements and nine-tenths of its engagements. These are the men who have sat beneath the midday midnight of a dying Savior's griefs and heard Him cry, "I thirst," as He bore the guilt of sinners. But, alas, multitudes of men do not want holiness—they want their harlots, they want their wine, they want their carnivals of vice, they want their selfishness and they want everything that Christ does not give, so they cry, "Not this Man, but Barabbas," and they make the awful choice of sin as they neglect their Lord! These are "the enemies of the Cross of Christ."

III. I cannot go further into that painful part of the subject, for time fails me, and I want next, to enquire, WHAT ARE THE MARKS OF THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCH?

Paul is evidently alluding here to some who professed to be followers of Christ, but who were really "the enemies of the Cross of Christ." I do believe, Brothers and Sisters, that the description given of them is true of many in our day. Here is what the Apostle said of them, "Whose God is their belly." That surely means *self-indulgence* and applies to professing Christians who never restrain their appetites, or their desires, or their passions—who are sensual while they boast of being spiritual—who are altogether given up to self-indulgence and yet claim to be followers of the Man of Sorrows who gave up everything for the good of others. That is the first kind of "enemies of the Cross of Christ."

Next are those who are the subjects of *shameful pride*—"whose glory is in their shame." That is to say, they boast of things of which they ought to be ashamed. Do you not know some who can grind down the wages of their employees and boast that they have done a clever and business-like thing—and then go and "take the sacrament"? Think of the poor starving needlewomen who, if they sew their souls away, cannot get bread enough to appease their hunger! I do not know who it is who oppresses them so

cruelly, but I should not wonder if their taskmasters do not even think that they will go to Heaven—I shall be surprised if they are not very greatly mistaken! Then there are others who are the prey of avarice, and they boast of what they can save. They never give anything to the poor, they seem to think that it is wrong to do so. They even found a Society to stop it! God gives to the evil as well as to the good, but they give to no one! They call their methods, "political economy," and glory that they save so much which others would have given away. As to the cause of God, one wretched creature boasted that his soul did not cost him a shilling a year! Somebody said that such a sum would be too great an expense for such a miserable soul as his, and we hardly wonder at the sarcasm of the remark. Alas, that there should be those who glory in that kind of thing—pinching, grinding, money-loving wretches! Some of these are even called Christians, but all the while "they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ."

There are others who profess to be Christians who go about talking to young people and trying to indoctrinate them with false views. Sometimes they even cause the faith of the old to stagger—and they draw one and another aside to this novelty and to that, which is not according to the Scripture. I believe that such people are the worst "enemies of the Cross of Christ." When the devil is in the pulpit, he *is* a devil! When we get bad doctrine proclaimed by ministers of Christ, themselves, then have we, indeed, "the enemies of the Cross of Christ," and there are, nowadays, plenty of them of whom I would speak, even weeping, as I say that, "they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ."

Paul adds one other description of these "enemies of the Cross of Christ," that is, *worldliness*—"who mind earthly things." This is a very close home-thrust to many professing Christians. Do they ever help the Sunday school? Oh, no, no! Sunday school? They hope somebody or other attends to it, but it is no concern of theirs. Do they ever aid in a Mission? A Mission? Why, they do not get the shutters closed till so late at night that they cannot help in mission work—they have enough to do to look after themselves. But are they doing nothing at all for Christ? No, nothing! And for 20 years together, nothing. What are they minding, then? Well, I do not know. Only I am sure that they cannot be minding anything but "earthly things." That is all. This is the catechism that they go through every day—"What shall we eat? What shall we drink? With what shall we be clothed?" That is all they live for.

Now, do not be deceived! If this is true concerning you, you are no friend of Christ, for those who belong to Christ admit that they are not their own, but they are bought with a price and they have some higher and nobler objective than that which takes up the lives of worldlings. They are living for God and for eternity, for Christ and for the good of men! And their great wish is to lay themselves out for the Glory of God and the benefit of the human race. God grant that we may not be found

among these characters, "whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things"!

IV. For, next, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THESE PEOPLE?

We are told that their "end is destruction." There will be *a total destruction of their profession.* There will be *a destruction of all their hopes.* There will be *a destruction of all their happiness.* There will be *destruction of themselves* and they shall stand forever as destroyed and ruined things, ghastly exhibitions of what sin can do—and what must follow upon a false profession, or any other form of enmity to the Cross of Christ.

V. Now, lastly, How SHOULD WE ACT IN THIS MATTER? If there are still such people as the Apostle describes, what have you and I to do concerning them?

Well, first, some of us have to *give frequent warning*—"Of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ." O Friends, there are so many outside the professing Church who are "the enemies of the Cross of Christ" that it might break one's heart to think of them! But those who are *inside* the Church, professors who never knew Christ, who have often come to the Communion Table, but have never had fellowship with *Christ*—who are quite satisfied with their outward religion while their hearts are rotten through and through—it is an awful and a dreadful thing that there should be such! But we are bound to keep on exhorting one another and warning one another because there are such "enemies of the Cross of Christ" even inside His nominal Church.

And, let me add, if exhortations are frequently to be given, the *warnings ought to be as frequently taken.* How you and I ought often to pass the Apostolic question round, "Lord, is it I?" Suppose He stood on this platform and lifted up those pierced hands and said in majestic sorrow, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, one of you shall betray Me"? Would not that question stir us all to anguish? Well, let it do so! See to it that you make sure work for eternity, my Brothers and Sisters, and while I talk to you—I am talking to myself as well—oh, see to it that you do not have a flimsy profession, a name to live when you are really dead! What is religion worth if it is not in the heart? It is like the pageantry which surrounds the grave—the pomp, the pall, the hearse—death decently covered up! May God, of His infinite mercy, save us from having a dead profession, for, as the Lord lives, He will not endure dead professors! "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living," and He will one day say, "Bury My dead out of My sight." These "enemies of the Cross of Christ" shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of His power.

But while we speak of these people, *it becomes us to be very tender,* for the Apostle says, "of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping." Why weeping? Because it is an awful thing for men to hear the

Divine and final sentence, "Depart, you cursed." I would not like to think of anybody here who will have that for his portion at the Day of Judgment! And I would be a gross traitor to your souls if I did not also add that I cannot help fearing that this will be the lot of some of you! You have never come to Christ. Perhaps you have professed to do so, or, possibly, you have neither done it nor professed to do it, but you are openly and avowedly antagonistic to the Cross of Christ. May God's Grace convert you! Otherwise we may well weep over you that you should die in your sins.

But we have further tears because of the mischief that such sinners do. "Enemies of the Cross of Christ" do a world of damage to wife and children, neighbors and friends. "One sinner destroys much good." One graceless life is a great robbery of the treasury of God. One life spent in distinct opposition to the Gospel of Jesus is a terrible thing. A Scotchman took some thistle seed to Australia that he might see a thistle grow on his farm. He only wanted one or two rare old Scotch thistles to make him think that he was at home. But now, thousands of acres are covered with this horrible weed which nobody can destroy and which has become the most gross nuisance of the region! One seed of sin may cover a continent with crime! God save us, then, from being numbered with "the enemies of the Cross of Christ"! Why should we not all come to the Cross now? The best homage we can pay to Jesus is to come and receive Him as our Savior. Let us do so! Let us sing this verse while we do it—

"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"

Let those who can truly sing it, do *so,* even if they never sang it before. God bless you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PHILIPPIANS 3.

Verse 1. *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.* As much as to say, "If this were the last sentence that I should write to you, I would say, 'Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.' It is your privilege, it is your duty to rejoice in God—not in your health, your wealth, your children, your prosperity, but in the *Lord*." There is the unchanging and unbounded source of joy. It will do you no harm to rejoice in the Lord! The more you rejoice in Him, the more spiritually-minded will you become. "Finally, my brethren." That is, even to the end, not with you, the bitter end, but even to the end of life, rejoice in the Lord. Make this the *finis* of everything, the end of every day, the end of every year, the end of life. "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." Blessed is that religion in which it is a duty to be happy!

1. *To write the same things to you, to me, indeed, is not grievous, but for you it is safe.* Saying the same thing over and over again is safe, for your minds do not catch the Truth of God at the first hearing, and your memories are slippery.

2. *Beware of dogs.*—Men of a doggish, captious, selfish spirit. In Paul's day, there were some who were ca1led Cynics, that is to say, dogs. "Beware of dogs."

2. *Beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.* By which Paul meant those Jews who made a great point of circumcision. He calls them here "the cutters," for they mangled and cut the Church of God in pieces. "Beware of the concision."

3. *For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.* These are three marks of the true Israel of God. Have you all of them—worshipping God in the spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus and having no confidence in the flesh?

4. *Though I might also have confidence in the flesh.* If anybody might, Paul might. If birth, if education, or if external religiousness could have saved anybody in the world, it would have saved Saul of Tarsus!

4, 5. *If anyone thinks that he may have confidence in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day.* The ritual was observed even to the hour in his case.

5. *Of the stock of Israel.* Not an Edomite or a Samaritan, but, "of the stock of Israel" and of the very center of that stock.

5. *Of the tribe of Benjamin.* Which remained with Judah, faithful, long after the ten tribes had gone aside.

5. *An Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the Law, a Pharisee.* That is, one who observed all the minutiae and details of the Ceremonial Law and a good deal more—the traditions of the elders which hung like moss about the old stone of Jewish ceremonialism. Paul had observed all that.

6. *Concerning zeal, persecuting the Church!* He was most zealous in the cause that he thought right. Bitterly, cruelly, even to the death, did he persecute the believers in Jesus.

6. *Touching the righteousness which is in the Law, blameless.* Paul had been kept from the vices into which many fell. In his young days, he had been pure. And all his days, he had been upright and sincere. As far as he knew, to the best of his light, he had observed the Law of God. In another place, he calls himself the chief of sinners. And so he was because he persecuted the Church of God. But, in another sense, I may say of him that there is no man who stood so good a chance of being justified by works as Paul did, if there could have been any justification in that way.

7. *But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.* His faith in Jesus reversed all his former estimates, so that his gains he counted to be losses. He thought it so much the worse, concerning zeal,

to have persecuted the Church, and so much to his injury to have imagined that he was blameless in the Presence of God.

8. *Yes doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung.*—Offal, refuse, garbage—

8. *That I may win Christ.* He had every opportunity of advancement. He was a fine scholar and might have reached the highest degree in connection with the Sanhedrim and the synagogue, but he thought nothing of all that—he threw it all away as worthless and declared that *this* was his ambition—"That I may win Christ."

9. *And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* It must be more glorious to be justified by God than by ourselves. It must be more safe to wear the righteousness of Christ than to wear our own. Nothing can so dignify our manhood as to have Christ, Himself, to be "the Lord our Righteousness." This Paul chose in preference to everything else.

10, 11. *That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.* See to what Paul is looking forward—resurrection—and therefore he lets this life go as of secondary importance. He is willing to suffer as Christ suffered and to die as Christ died. You and I may never be called to make that great sacrifice, but if we are true followers of Christ, we shall be prepared for it. If ever it should happen that Christ and our life shall be put in competition, we must not deliberate for a moment, for Christ is all, and we must be ready to give up all for Christ.

12. *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.* He does not say that anybody has been perfect, but he does say that *he was not so himself*, and I should think that any man who believed himself to be better than Paul would thereby prove at once that he was not perfect, for he must be sadly lacking in humility.

12. *But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.* "All that Christ meant me to be, I want to be. All that Christ meant to give me, I want to have. All that He meant me to do, I want to do, to apprehend, to lay hold of that for which I am laid hold of by Christ Jesus."

13. *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended.* That is Paul's judgment concerning himself—he has not yet attained to the full all that the religion of Christ can give him.

13, 14. *But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Always making progress—throwing himself into it, having the reward be-

fore him, the prize of perfection in Christ—and running towards it with all his might.

15. *Let us, therefore, as many as are mature.* Or, "would be perfect."

15. *Be thus minded: and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.* I admire that sentence. If any Brother has not reached a full knowledge of the Truth of God, let us not condemn him, or cast him out of our company, but say to him, "God shall reveal even this unto you."

16. *Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.* There are some points upon which we are all agreed. There is some standing ground where the babe in Grace may meet with the man in Christ Jesus. Well, as far as we see eye to eye, let us co-operate with one another, let us have our hearts knit together in a holy unanimity. "Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." There are some people who are always looking out for points of difference—their motto seems to be, "If we differ in anything, let us split away from one another." Their great idea is that by dividing we shall conquer! The fact is that by separating ourselves from one another, we shall miss all hope of strength and play into the hands of the adversaries.

17. *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as you have us for an example.* For the true servant of Christ teaches by his life as much as by his words.

18-20. (*For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things*). *For our conversation.* Or, citizenship—

20, 21. *Is in Heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body.* Vile so far that it has been defiled by sin. Vile in comparison with that body which shall be—"Who shall change our vile body," the body of our humiliation.

21. *That it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—289, 649, 642.

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

THE SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION
NO. 2554

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 30, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 18, 1855.

"And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said unto them, Loose him, and let him go." John 11:43, 44.

PERHAPS the legitimate topic of this discourse, after such a text, ought to be the resurrection of the dead. Lazarus had died—he had lain in his grave. At the invitation of his sisters, Jesus Christ came to see them and His visit answered the double purpose of comforting the bereaved and restoring the dead. It would be a blessed and an excellent topic were we, for a little while, to dilate upon the wonders of the resurrection. We shall do so for a few moments and then we shall come to the principal theme of this evening which will rather concern spiritual resurrection from a spiritual death, than that natural resurrection which is to take place upon us all, by-and-by.

The very fact that Lazarus came from his grave, after he had lain there four days and was corrupt, and that he was called from the sepulcher by the mighty voice of Jesus is, to us, a proof that the dead shall rise at the voice of Jesus at the Last Great Day. Every Christian believes that there is to be a resurrection of the dead, but, unfortunately, the great Doctrine of the Resurrection is not, by most of us, made so prominent as it ought to be. In old times, the Resurrection was preached by the Apostles as being the sum and substance of the Gospel. Wherever Paul went, we know that he spoke concerning the Resurrection of the dead—and then, "some mocked." But now, usually, if we speak concerning the after state of the departed, we generally treat of immortality, not of resurrection. Now, immortality was known to the ancients before the Gospel came. They believed in a kind of immortality, but *resurrection* never entered into the thoughts of the heathen. Many of them believed in the immortality of the soul. Those who had been enlightened by powerful reason, or remnants of ancient tradition, believed that the soul did not die, but lived on in a future state. But immortality is not resurrection! And the immortality of the *soul* is very different from the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the *body*. We believe that the soul is immortal and shall last forever, but

we believe something more than that. We believe that the body is immortal, too! And that after this body shall have been sown in the grave—in the Lord's good time it shall be raised again and shall either be translated to Heaven, there to enjoy eternal bliss—or else be sent down to Hell to suffer forever and ever.

The Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead belongs peculiarly to the Christian dispensation. It was never taught by any rationalists or philosophers. They might hold the transmigration of souls, but the resurrection of the body they did not hold. But we, as Christians, really believe that this body which we now inhabit, though it must die and see corruption, shall be raised from the dust—that, though consumed on the funeral pyre, its ashes, scattered to the winds, shall yet come together again! We believe that do what you will with the body—divide it, scatter it, mingle it—God, by the fiat of His Omnipotence, shall rebuild the fabric to become the habitation of the living soul forever and forever. We dare not in fact, deny this, because we are so expressly taught it in the sacred writings and it has been so fully and satisfactorily proved by the Apostle Paul.

And oh, my Friends, is it not a blessed fact that we shall rise again? I see among my audience some whose garb of woe betokens that they have lost a friend. I see some whose time-worn countenances tell me that they must have buried a mother or a father. Others, I know, have laid beloved infants in the dust. Others have had a precious husband or wife severed from their bosom. I mark among you some whose dress tell me you have been lately widowed, or bereaved of one tenderly beloved. Ah, despair not, you mourners! Here is a fact for you—not only that your soul and the soul of your loved one shall meet in eternity—but that the same body on which you doted shall, if you are Believers, be seen by you in Heaven! The eyes of the tender and pious mother which once dropped tears on you shall behold you in Heaven! And the hands of that pious father, now lying in the grave, that once lay on your head and consecrated you to the Lord shall be grasped by you in Heaven! Not only shall the soul of that infant live forever and ever, but its beautiful body, which is dear to you as the casket which contained the soul of your child, shall live again! It shall not be a fictitious resurrection—it shall not be a new race of ethereal creatures—but actual bodies shall be ours.

And oh, my Brothers and Sisters, if you have been bereft of all your friends—if they have departed in the faith of Jesus, you shall see them again! "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." But yet more blessed are they to be, "for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible," and we shall see the bodies of those we once loved on earth. Those bodies we once silently gazed upon, as they lay in all the stiffness of death, we shall see quickened and glorified! That mortal shall "put on immortality." That corruptible shall, "put on incorruption." It was "sown in weakness" and we wept

when we saw it lowered into the grave—but it shall be "raised in power." It was "sown a natural body" and though it shall be "raised a spiritual body," yet it shall be a body to all intents and purposes, as it was before. And we shall recognize it as such—

"Oh, sacred hope! Oh, blissful hope,
That Jesus' Grace has given;
The hope, when days and years are past,
We all shall meet in Heaven!"

Not in a separate existence of merely souls, but souls and bodies, too! And—

"There, on a green and flowery mount,
Our wearied (bodies as well as) souls shall sit,
And with transporting joys recount
The labors of our feet."

Ah, Beloved, does not this make Christianity worth having? Does not this light up the grave with a supernatural splendor—this cheering, this glorious, this overpowering, this more than natural, this superhuman Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead? I will not stop to picture the scene—I might tell you of the silent graves and of the churchyards covered with the grass of ages. I might picture to you the battlefields, I might bid you hear the voice of Jesus when, descending with the sound of the trumpet and with an exceedingly great army of angels, He shall say, "Awake, you dead, and come to judgment!" When he cries, "Awake!" eyes that have been glazed for many a year shall open! Bodies that have long been stiffened shall regain their energy and stand upright! Not sheeted ghosts, not phantoms, not visions, but actual beings shall rise! *They*—the same persons who were buried—the real men, the real women. I think I see them bursting the cerements of the grave, pushing open their coffin lids and coming forth. Ah, we shall see them, and each one, for himself, shall rise. There shall rise Lazarus and Martha and Mary—and loved ones that belong to us—whom long we have wept as departed, we shall then rejoice over as having been recovered!

So much by way of preliminary remarks concerning the resurrection from the dead.

Now let us deal with the subject in another manner. The death of Lazarus, his burial in the tomb and his corruption are a figure and picture of the spiritual condition of every soul by nature. The voice of Jesus, crying, "Lazarus, come forth," is an emblem of the voice of Jesus, by His Spirit, which quickens the soul. And the fact that Lazarus, even when alive, wore his grave clothes for a little while, until they were taken from him, is extremely significant, for if we allegorize upon it, it teaches us that even when a soul is quickened into spiritual life, it still wears some of its grave clothes which are only torn off when Jesus afterwards says, "Loose him, and let him go." We propose, therefore, to consider these three points. First*, the slumber of death,* in which every soul lies by nature. Secondly, *the voice of life*—"Jesus cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." And thirdly, the partial bondage which even the living soul

has to endure, which is signified by Lazarus coming forth bound hand and foot and having his face wrapped about with a napkin.

I. First, then, we have here THE SLUMBER OF DEATH in which all of us lie by nature. Come with me now, Christian, to "the rock from where you were hewn," to "the hole of the pit"—to the miry clay—"from where you were dug." Come with me to the house of death, for there your soul once lay, "dead in trespasses and sins." There are some in this world, we know, who utterly deny that the sinner is really dead in sins. I remember, some time ago, hearing a preacher assert that, though the Scriptures said that men were dead, it meant a metaphorical death—that they were not really and actually dead, but only metaphorically so. Now, I always like, when there is a metaphor, to keep to the metaphor. Some of the eminent doctors in Rowland Hill's day said that there were no such beings as angels, that they were only Oriental metaphors. "Very well," said Rowland Hill, "then it was a company of Oriental metaphors that sang at the birth of Christ, 'Glory to God in the highest.' Angels are Oriental metaphors? Then it was an Oriental metaphor that slew 185,000 of Sennacherib's army in a single night. Angels are Oriental metaphors? Then it was an Oriental metaphor that appeared to Peter in prison, that knocked off his chains and led him through the streets. Truly," Mr. Hill said, "these Oriental metaphors are wonderful things!" We will try the same rule here. "You has He metaphorically quickened, who were metaphorically dead in trespasses and sins!" A fine metaphorical Gospel that is! Then again, "To be carnally-minded is metaphorical death! But to be spiritually-minded is metaphorical life and peace!" Such language does not mean anything at all! My Friends, it is all nonsense about metaphorical death! Men are *really* dead in a spiritual sense.

But I must tell you in what this death consists. There are different grades of life—understand that to commence with. There is the life of a plant which a stone does not possess and, therefore, a stone is dead. There is the life of an animal which the plant does not possess and, if you were speaking of animal life, you might describe the plant as to that extent dead. Then, again, there is mental life—and since the animal has no mind, you might say that the animal is mentally dead. Then there is a grade beyond the soul life of a man—a spiritual life. To an ungodly man, there are only two parts—soul and body. To the Christian, there are three—body, soul, and *spirit.* And as a body without a soul would be dead, naturally—so a man without a spirit, a man who has not had a spark struck off from the great orb of Light called God—is spiritually dead. Nevertheless, there are some who assert that men who are ungodly are spiritually alive. Come, sinner, if you think thus, I must argue with you a little while.

First of all, if you are spiritually alive and can do spiritual actions, the first thing I ask you is, *Why do you not do them now?* Some men say that they can repent and believe when they like and they do not believe that, to do this, they need the power of the Spirit. Then, Sir, if you can do it,

and do not do it—if any man deserves to be damned, it is you! And on your own showing, if there is a corner of the Pit hotter than another, you ought to be put there!

The next thing I have to say to you, O Sinner, is this—You say, "I am not dead; I have spiritual life, and can pray, and repent and believe." Let me ask, *Have you tried to do it?* Do you say, "Yes"? Well, then, I know you will confess, unless you will lie before God, that you have found out your inability! There never was a man yet who strove to pray sincerely before God, but he felt something repressing his devotion. When he has come before God, under an agony of guilt, crying out for mercy, he has felt at times as if he could not pray, as if he could not utter a single word! Have none of you known what it is to be in such a condition that you cannot pray, that you cannot believe, that you cannot repent? When you put your hand on your heart and say, "O God, my heart is hard! I wish it would melt! I cannot break it"? When you would pray, do you not feel that your heart is far away, wandering in the world? The best method of proving a man's inability is to set him about doing the thing. When the young man said, "All these things have I kept from my youth up," Jesus, just to try him, said, "Go and sell all that you have." Ah, Beloved, when God brought us to Himself we wrestled in prayer and pleaded with him—and we were taught, after all, that the power for everything spiritual must come from *God,* for there were certain times and seasons when we could no more have prayed than we could have flown up to Heaven! When we could no more have believed than we could have taken the moon in our hands! We could not grasp a promise. We could not grapple with a single temptation. We felt ourselves to be powerless, lost, dead. Sinner, I tell you, you *are* dead as to all spiritual matters, and dead you always will be, if left to yourself—and you cannot by any means carry yourself to Heaven! The sovereign will and power of God alone must quicken you, or else you can do nothing except sin. Neither righteous acts nor coming to Jesus can you ever do of yourself.

But I think I hear someone say, "*If I cannot do anything, I will sit down where I am and make myself content.*" What? Will you sit down when Hell blazes before you, when the Pit is yawning at your feet, when damnation stares you in the face, when God is angry with you, when your sins are bellowing out to high Heaven for condemnation? Will you sit down? I tell you, you cannot and dare not sit down. Sit down? As well might a man sit on yonder housetop when the flames are blazing around him! As well might he float down the rapids, to be at once dashed to pieces! Ah, if you talk about sitting down, you give me the best proof in all the world that you are "dead in trespasses and sins," for if you were not dead, you would be beginning to cry out, "O God, quicken me! O God, give me life! I know that I am dead! I feel that I can do nothing, but You have promised to do it all for me. Though I am less than nothing, You have Omnipotence to give me life." Do you not see, Man, that I am putting you down that Christ may pick you up? Do you not see that I am laying you low, not to

perish, not to be trampled on in the dust, but rather that, like a corn of wheat, you might fall into the ground and die and afterwards be quickened and bring forth fruit? Nothing can bring a man into a state of life so well as a feeling of death! And if I could get my Hearers, one and all, to recognize, acknowledge and feel that they were in a state of spiritual death and utterly powerless, I could then have hope for them—for no man can confess himself to be dead and yet sit down contentedly—he will cry out for Divine Grace and ask God to deliver him from that death.

But there is one thing I have yet to tell you before I leave this point and it is that *the ungodly man is something more than dead.* He is like Lazarus lying in his tomb. You remember those homely words which Martha said to Jesus? They are translated into plain Saxon and, I daresay, the Hebrew is quite as expressive, "Lord, by this time he stinks: for he has been dead four days." Yes, Brothers and Sisters, and this is the condition of every ungodly man—the is not only dead, but he has become positively corrupt in God's sight! There are some here, to whom I might point at this moment, who know what I mean when I say they not only groan under a sense of spiritual death, but feel themselves to be a stench in their own nostrils and in God's also. I ask you, poor convicted sinner, does there live or exist in this world a greater nuisance than yourself? I know you will say, "No, there may be other filthy and abominable things, but I feel myself to be the most loathsome incarnation of filthiness that ever could have existed. I did not always think myself to be so, but I do now. I feel that I am not simply dead and powerless, but I feel offensive to myself, so that I wish I could run away from myself. And I feel offensive, moreover, to God—utterly obnoxious to Him." Well, then, if that is your feeling, you are brought low enough, for it is just when we begin to corrupt, as the body of Lazarus did, and we, like Martha, are for giving everything up as hopeless, that Jesus Christ calls as He did then, "Lazarus, come forth!"

Now you see what I have made my congregation out to be. Some of you are alive—you have been quickened by God. But as for the rest of you, I am standing in an immense catacomb, tonight, and all around me there are dead persons—in the gallery and down below—men and women who are spiritually dead!

II. But now comes the wonder-working process, THE VOICE OF LIFE. Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth."

We commence, then, with this wonder-working process by saying that *the giving of life to Lazarus was instantaneous.* There lay Lazarus in the grave, dead and corrupt. Jesus cried aloud, "Lazarus, come forth." We do not read that a single moment elapsed between the time when Christ said the words and when Lazarus came out of his grave! It did not take the soul an instant to wing its way into the body of Lazarus, nor did that body need any delay to become alive, again! So, if the Lord speaks to a man and quickens him to spiritual life, it is an instantaneous work. There are some of you standing there, apparently alive, but you feel, you

acknowledge, you confess, that you are dead. Well, if the Lord speaks to you tonight, life will come into you in a moment, in one single instant! The power of Divine Grace is shown in this, that it converts a man instantly and on the spot! It does not take hours to justify—justification is done in a moment! It does not take hours to regenerate—regeneration is done in a second. We are born and we die, naturally, in instants. And so it is with regard to spiritual death and spiritual life—they occupy no period of time, but are done instantly, whenever Jesus speaks! Oh, if my Master would cry tonight, "Lazarus, come forth!" there is not a Lazarus here—although covered with the shroud of drunkenness, bound about with the belt of swearing, or surrounded with a huge stone coffin of evil habits and wickedness—who would not burst that coffin and come forth a living man!

But mark, *it was not the disciples, but Jesus, who said,* "*Lazarus, come forth.*" How often have I strived to preach you, if possible, into life—but that could not be done. I remember, when I have preached at different times in the country, and sometimes here, that my whole soul has agonized over men—every nerve of my body has been strained and I could have wept my very being out of my eyes and carried my whole frame away in a flood of tears—if I could but win souls. On such occasions, how we preach! As if we had men before us, personally, and were clutching them and begging them to come to Christ! But with all that, I know I never yet made a soul alive, and never shall. And I am perfectly conscious that all the pleadings of all the living ambassadors from God will never induce a sinner to come to Jesus unless Jesus comes to that sinner! Peter might have cried for a long while, "Lazarus, come forth," before Lazarus would have moved an inch! So might James or John—but when Jesus does it, it is done! Oh, does not this lower the pride of the minister? What is he? He is a poor little trumpet through which God blows, but nothing else! In vain do I scatter seed—it is on God the harvest depends! And all my Brothers in the ministry might preach till they were blind, but they would have no success unless the Spirit attended the quickening Word!

But, poor Soul, though the hearer cannot do it, and although the minister cannot do it, I want to persuade you, if I can, that tonight, *dead as you are, Jesus can speak you to life.* Let me single out a character, for I like to do that. There is a man who says, "I have been living 50 years in sin and tonight I am worse than ever. My old habits bind me hand and foot and I have no hope of being delivered." Now, if tonight, my Hearer, Jesus says, "Lazarus, come forth," you will come forth in an instant! "No, but," you say, "I am corrupt." Ah, but Christ is mightier than your corruption! Do you say, "I am dead"? No, but Christ is "life." Do you say, "I am bound hand and foot, and in a dungeon of darkness"? No, but Christ is a Light in darkness and He will disperse the gloom. You say, perhaps, "I do not deserve it," but Jesus cares nothing for deserving. The dead body of Lazarus deserved nothing! It was putrid and only deserved to

have the stone covering it forever. "Roll away the stone," says Christ, and oh, what odor issued forth! And there may be some from whom Jesus Christ may have rolled away the stone tonight—and they may be standing at their own graves and feeling themselves loathsome and offensive. But still, my Hearer, offensive as you are, Jesus asks no merit of you—He will give you *His* merits. It is only for Him to say, "Come forth," and you will, this night, come forth from your grave—and be made alive in Christ Jesus! Oh, may our God wake many dead souls that may be present and bring them to life by His summons, "Lazarus, come forth."

I think I hear another person saying, "Ah, but I am afraid, Sir, that if I were told to come forth, the devil would not let me—he has been oppressing me so long—he has been trying to keep me down and to make me lie still in my grave! I feel that he is now sitting upon my breast and weighing down all my hopes, and quenching all my love." Ah, but let me tell you Sinner, there is not one in Hell that is so mighty as Christ is in Heaven! The Evil One is in Christ's power and if you will but call upon Him—if He has enabled you only to utter a groan this night—He will cry unto you, "Come forth," and you shall live!

III. Now let us turn for a few moments to the last point and that is, THE PARTIAL BONDAGE.

Even when a soul is called by Divine Grace from death to life, yet it often wears its grave clothes for a long while. Many of my dear friends are afraid they are not converted because they are not like Mr. So-and-So, or Mrs. So-and-So—they have not so much faith and assurance and do not know as much as others—so they are afraid they are not alive. I have a word of comfort for them! The fact that Lazarus came forth in his grave clothes, with a napkin wrapped about his head, teaches us that many of us, though we are alive in Christ, still have our grave clothes on. I believe many Arminians still have their napkin about their head. That is to say, they have not got quite free from trusting in works. They used to, when dead, believe in salvation by works—they do not, now, but they still have some remnants of their grave clothes hanging about them. They have not yet come to believe that salvation is by Sovereign Grace, alone, but will have some works mixed up with it. They fear that, after all, God may cast them out of the Covenant. Oh, if we could but tear their napkin off! We will not quarrel with them, we will not be angry with them—but we think we hear Jesus Christ say to us, "Loose them, and let them go." And we will try all the ways in our power, by preaching, to pull the napkin from their eyes and let them see, "free election known by calling," full salvation, matchless security, discriminating Grace, particular redemption and all those things that make up the great strength of the Gospel of Jesus!

This, however, is not the point I want to dwell on with you, because I think most of you have got that napkin off your eyes. But when *we first obtain spiritual life, how many grave clothes there are hanging about us!* A man who has been a drunk, even though he becomes a living child of

God, will sometimes find his old habits clinging to him. I have known many drunks give up their drunkenness, but when they have been going by a bar, they have thought that, for the life of them, they could not keep from going in. And they have often well-near gone astray and their feet have almost slipped. And the man who has been a swearer will confess that there have been times when the vile words have almost come from his lips—perhaps not quite—I hope not, but there will be enough to show that he has some of his grave clothes still hanging about him. We have known men who have indulged in other kinds of vices and sins and whenever an opportunity has presented itself, there has been the old feeling getting up and saying, "Let me do it, let me do it," and they have strived to keep it down, but they have hardly been strong enough. The grave clothes have still been about them. Those grave clothes will keep on very tightly until the habit is broken off. I believe there is not a Christian living who has not some shreds of his grave clothes remaining and that until we lie down in the grave, we shall carry them about with us.

Look at poor Paul. Who could have been a more holy man than he? Yet he cried, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Let this comfort and cheer the man who has come to Christ, but who is yet striving against his corruption. Perhaps his unbelief says, "If you were a child of God, you would not have these wicked thoughts and inclinations." But, let me ask, do you hate those thoughts and inclinations? Then tell the devil, next time that he assails you thus, that he lies, for verily, this is not a sign that you are *not* the Lord's, but rather a sign that you *are* His, for if you were not a child of God, you would not mind these things! But since you are His child, you strive against them.

These wicked grave clothes will show themselves sometimes. We know some who seem as if they could not get rid of their old angry tempers as long as they live. Their grave clothes have been torn in shreds by Divine Grace. They do not quite strap their arms up, but the shreds still hang about them—and our Brothers and Sisters, even though converted, still seem inclined, sometimes, to be hot and fierce. And we meet with instances, now and then, even in the Church, of some Brothers and Sisters who cannot exactly curb themselves—they have some of their grave clothes still about them. Do not think I am speaking to exonerate or excuse you—I am striving to comfort you. You may be spiritually alive with these grave clothes on if you struggle against them and try to get them off. But if you *love* them, they are not your grave clothes, but your living clothes—you are doing the work of your father—and you shall have his wages! If you feel your sins to be grave clothes and are anxious to get rid of them, though you cannot conquer all your sins and corruptions, be not dismayed—trust in Christ! Though the grave clothes yet hang about you, still trust His mercy and His Grace, for, by-and-by, Jesus Christ shall say, "Loose him, and let him go."

We are loosed, first, from one bad habit, and then from another. All the while I live, I feel that I carry some of my grave clothes about with me—the garment that encumbers me and the sin that most easily besets me. But, by-and-by, (it may only be tomorrow, but it may be many years hence—perhaps some of you will pray for me that it may be many years—but I do not know why we should wish it, but, by-and-by), the time will come and Christ will say, "Loose him, and let him go." I see one lying on his bed—the eyes glancing upward to Heaven, the pulses faint and few—the breath drawn heavily, the body decaying. What does all this mean? Why, it is the undoing of the wires of the cage and, in a little while, when sickness and pain have done their work, Christ will say, "Loose him, and let him go." I remember hearing a brother-minister telling me of his pious sister's death-bed. When she was very near dying, she said, "Sit me up a moment," and they did. She then said—

"'Oh! that the final word were given,
Loose me, and let me rise to Heaven,
And wrap myself in God.'"

In a moment or two, she fell back. God had said, "Loose her, and let her go." Oh, how our disembodied spirits will rejoice when God says, "Loose them, and let them go." We are fettered, now—we shall be emancipated then! Then our spirits shall fly more rapidly than the flashing lightning! Then shall they be wafted along, swifter than the gales of the North or the winds of the South! We shall fly upwards to our God and be free forever from all that now distresses us, for God shall have said, "Loose them, and let them go."

And now a thought or two, dear Hearers, to finish up with. Before God will say, "Loose him, and let him go," remember, you must have had life. Now I come to this last solemn enquiry. *How many of us in this place, tonight, have life?* How frequently it is the case that we preach to our people with all our soul and might, and yet nobody takes it home to himself! How often, my Friends, have I preached in vain, from the simple fact that the hearer has listened and there has been no application of it to his own soul! But, oh, I would not let you go, feeble as I am, and unable to say much to you, until I have tried to press this matter home upon your souls! My Hearers, in a little while I, too, must stand before God's bar. And when I think of it, it is enough to make me tremble! When I call to mind the tens and hundreds of thousands unto whom I have ministered the Word of the Gospel, and think if there should, on the Last Day, be found one person who shall lay his damnation to my charge, how horrible and terrible must be my lot! If, after having preached to others, I should have been unfaithful and should prove a castaway, what an awful thing that would be! In these days, when it is advertised that there is a special sermon to be preached, people rush off to hear a popular preacher, or somebody who happens to be much talked about—but do you know what that man does when he preaches, and what you do when you hear? Are you aware that every time that man stands in the pulpit, if

he is unfaithful, he subjects himself to the wrath of God? Do you not know that if, at last, that man who stands up to preach to the people should have been discovered to have preached false doctrine, his doom must be horrible in the extreme? And do you remember, when you hear, it is not as if you go to see a play, or to listen to a recital? You are listening to a man who professes to speak by God and for God! And to speak for your good and his heart yearns over you. Oh, it is solemn work to preach, and it should be solemn work to hear! For every preaching and every hearing the Lord will call us to account in the Last Great Day when He shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. What has the preacher talked of tonight?

He has told you, first, that you are all dead. But some of you will go away and laugh at it—but laughing at it will not make you alive. He has told you, in the next place, that Christ can make you alive. But you despise that Christ—but mark, your despising Him will not free you from condemnation at the Last Great Day. He has told you of the bands of death that some of you are bound with, and you are, perhaps, tempted to smile. But mark you this—if you never sorrow over the bands of death, here, you will have to wear clanking fetters forever! Did I speak of fiction when I said that? I speak not of fiction, but a dread reality! There is, somewhere—God knows where it is—a place where the fire of Gehenna shall torture bodies forever and where unutterable misery shall pain souls! And oh, tremble, you heavens, and shake, you hills! O Earth, let your solid ribs of brass shake and let your heart be dissolved! It is a fact—a fearful fact that there is a Hell! I know not where it is—my spirit longs not to visit that dread region! But had it wings, it might fly somewhere and it would find a Hell—not a picture, not a dream, but a positive Hell! And there are souls there, this night, that are biting their bonds of iron and shrieking out under inexpressible torture! And there are some of your friends and relations there, perhaps—some whom you knew in the flesh—the man with whom you drained the wine-cups, the harlot, the adulterer, the thief and such-like persons. There they are, in Hell, at this hour!

Do you believe it? I do not think you do, but do you believe *God's Word*? Or are you hardy infidels and deny it? "It is true," you say. Then are you so mad and irrational as to persevere in the road to there? O Sirs, if there were some tremendous precipice and I saw you hastily approaching it, would I not cry out to you and say, "Stop! Stop! Stop! There is ruin before you"? And may I not tonight plead with you for your life, that you may be led to stop your course of sin? For "the wages of sin is death," while the "gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," whom you are shunning, avoiding and grieving! Must I not plead with you? Shall you be going to Hell blindfolded and shall not one of your poor fellow creatures pull the bandage from your eyes? Shall he not call to you, without being thought mad, or an enthusiast? Well, if I am mad, in that respect may I always be so! And if that is to be an enthusiast, let

none be sober! But if it is mad and enthusiastic to go to Heaven, how much more so is it to go to Hell? O God, show these poor souls what their portion in the flames must be and tell them—for Your mercy's sake tell them—what salvation by Jesus Christ is!

Do you ask *me* to tell you that before I finish? Do I hear one say, "Men and brethren, what must I do to be saved?" I answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." It is written, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." If you will trust in Jesus, tonight, you shall be saved! It does not say such-and-such a person that believes, but, "he that believes"—if he has been a drunk, a swearer, or whatever—"he that believes and is baptized"—mark how the two are put together! I dare not part what Christ has joined, nor dare I reverse their proper order—"he that believes and is baptized shall be saved."

Farewell to you, my Hearers, for this night. I shall never meet some of you again in this world. Before another Sabbath is come, your corpse may have been laid in the grave. Which of us shall it be? On whom the hungry teeth of Death shall feed before another Sabbath shall let its chimes be heard? Oh, if you are the man, or if the preacher is the doomed one, may it be fulfilled—

"Prepare me, Lord, for Your right hand,
Then come the joyful day!
Come death and some celestial band,
To bear my soul away."

But another says, "I will not enter this Chapel again! I will never listen to that man again! I will never again hear his voice." Good-bye, my Friend. I hope you will hear someone who will be as faithful to you and if you find a man who loves you more, or would suffer more for your sake, go and hear him! And God bless him to your soul! But one says, "I will hear no more of this matter! It is cant. It is nonsense. I will not turn." Ah, my Hearer, if I see you going to destruction and you know it not, it is none the less destruction because you do not see it! But another says, "This night I will give myself to Jesus, for I know I need life. I lie down, a corpse, and though I cannot move, I know that when He passes by, He will give me life." Go! God has something for you! Go and fall before Him! You shall have life bestowed upon you—go and accept it! For, wherever there is a *"now,"* it is of God. The Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

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

THE STRONGHOLD
NO. 2555

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 11, 1883.

"The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble,
and He knows them that trust in Him."
Nahum 1:7.

HAVE you read this chapter through? It is a very terrible one—it is like the rushing of a mighty river when it is nearing a waterfall. It boils, seethes and flows with overwhelming force, bearing everything before it, yet, right in the middle of the surging flood, there stands out, like a green island, this most cheering, comforting and delightful text! Listen a minute to the Prophet's words of terror. "The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. He rebukes the sea, and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers: Bashan languishes, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languishes. The mountains quake at Him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at His Presence, yes, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before His indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him."

Then, just as there has sometimes been a break and a delightful silence in the very midst of some tremendous chorus of sacred song, so here the thunder pauses, the hurricane is stopped and we hear the sweet music of this still small voice—"Jehovah is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows them that trust in Him"—from which we may gather that there is always a hiding place for His people—His eyes of love are fixed on them even when they flash fire upon His adversaries! Nothing shall harm them, though the earth is removed and the mountains are cast into the midst of the sea! They may rejoice in the goodness of the Lord in the day of His fierce anger.

I invite you, dear Friends, to consider this text, and may the Holy Spirit make the meditation which will follow to be useful! There are three things, here, to be thought about. First let us think *of God Himself*—"The Lord is good." Then let our minds ponder a little upon *what God is to us*—"a stronghold in the day of trouble." And then we will change the theme a little and speak of *God with us*—"He knows them that trust in Him."

I. First, then, let us think of GOD HIMSELF—"Jehovah is good." It is well for us to be able to say so when the day of trouble is really upon us. It is one thing to sit under your vine and fig tree and sing, "The Lord is good." It is quite another thing when the vine and fig tree have both been cut down and all your comfort is gone, to still say, "The Lord is good." Do you not think that if we fail to say it the second time, it will look as if, after all, it was the vine and fig tree that were good, and not God? Or, at least, that our view of God's goodness was very much derived from the fact of our being in so much comfort? It was an accusation which Satan brought against Job that he loved God for what he got out of him—"Have not You made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side?" The devil is very apt to charge God's people with having a cupboard love, but it is well for us to refute that accusation by loving, praising and adoring God when comforts fail, when the hedge is broken and when the things that we received with gratitude are, at length, in wisdom, taken away. Oh, what a rebuff the archfiend had when Job, on his dunghill scraping his sores and with his children dead and his property gone, yet said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

That is the spirit of our text. Here is a man of God, in the midst of the overwhelming flood, standing up and saying—"The Lord is good. The Lord is good." There are some persons who, even in their theology, do not believe God to be good. "It cannot be," they say, "that the wicked will be cast into Hell if God is good." And they argue, therefore, the ungodly will not be punished. But the child of God says that though they will certainly be cast into Hell, God is good for all that. It is true that He will punish sin and punish it everlastingly, but God is good for all that. "No," say others, "but if He is good, He cannot do so." You may make unto yourselves another god and call him God, but the Christian says, "*The Lord* is good, Jehovah is good. He is good as I find Him—good as an angry God—good when I read such words as these, 'With an overrunning flood He will make an utter end of the place, thereof, and darkness shall pursue His enemies.'" God is good, even then—He is always good! Let Him reveal Himself as He pleases, let Him do what He pleases—whatever I find He reveals about Himself, or whatever I see in Providence about Him, my heart is bowed down! Even when my understanding cannot understand, this firm piece of good sound doctrine is still true—"The Lord is and must be good."

The goodness of God is seen *in His very name,* for what is His name, "God," but short for *good*? We call Him God because we count the good. And so good is He that "there is none good save One; that is, God." All other goodness that exists is but a spark from this great Sun, or else it is a lie! There never would have been any goodness in the world apart from God, nor can goodness continue to exist, much less increase, except as God, whose very name is good, shall continue to make that goodness flow forth from Himself unto the sons of men. *God is essentially good.* It is His very Nature to be good. He could not be otherwise than good. If you

and I are good, it is not because of our nature that we are good. Alas, since the Fall, it is true that in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwells no good thing—and any goodness has to be imparted to us. But to God no goodness can be brought—from God all goodness must be fetched, for He is good, essentially!

And *God is good independently.* There are none that make Him good, or help Him to be so. If you and I are good in any way, it is by His Grace, by His teaching, by the example of friends, by Divine restraints, by gracious constraints. By a thousand helps and props our poor goodness stands, but His goodness stands of itself! None can make Him better. None keep Him back from being evil. He is good, He must be good and that entirely in and of Himself—essentially and independently good. I want you to think of this, because I want you never to get the notion in your head that God is good through certain means and under certain circumstances and conditions—or that the goodness of God depends upon the life of such an one, or upon your possession of such-and-such earthly goods. Oh, no! God is good independently of all these and if all these were swept away, God would be just as good and just as good to you! You may question it, but it should never be a matter of question. If every conduit pipe which now conveys to us streams of comfort from the fountainhead were broken and taken away, God could make the waters leap out of the rock, itself, and streams to flow in the desert immediately at our feet! As long as you have God, you have the essence of all good—and as long as God lives, whoever else dies, the goodness on which your soul is to feed has an independent existence.

Note, next, that *God is eternally and unchangeably good.* He cannot be better! He cannot be worse—He is absolutely perfect. There can be no improvement and there can be no depreciation in Him. He was good on your wedding-day, when He gave you the loved one to be the joy of your life. And He was just as good on that sorrowful day when the partner of your being was struck down. You thought God was good when your little child laughed in your lap and the house was glad with his merry ways, but He was just as good when the little coffin went silently out of the door, wet with parents' tears. God was good to you when you walked abroad in the sunlight and every breath of air meant health to you—and He is just as good when every step is a weariness and your body is consuming away with sickness. He has not changed. Why, dear Heart, you have not changed toward your child, have you? Yet you are evil and shall not He who is all good be just as full of love to His children in dark dispensations as in bright times? Assuredly it is so! If you should live till infirmities are multiplied—if it were possible for you to exist till you had numbered the years of Methuselah, yet you would still find God to be just as good as in your young days when first your heart leaped at the sound of His name! Do not be afraid, therefore, of what is yet to be, for *whatever* comes, "Truly God is good to Israel"—truly, "His mercy endures forever,"

Turn this little sentence over many times, and try to get the full meaning out of it. "The Lord is good"—*good in each one of His Divine Persons.* You do not doubt that the Father is good. He chose you before the world was. He gave His Son for you. He "has begotten us, again, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." He is our Father—surely He is good, is He not? There is Jesus, the second Person of the blessed Trinity in Unity. Is He not good? He "loved me, and gave Himself for me." He loved, lived, died, rose again and still lives pleading, preparing, waiting to come and take us to Himself. Is not Jesus good? That blessed Truth of God is beyond all question! Well, then, the Father is good and the Son is good. And the Holy Spirit—is He not good? Did He not first turn your eyes to Jesus? Did He not breathe into you the breath of spiritual life? And, since then, has He not been your Teacher, your Guide, your Helper, your Comforter, dwelling with you, suggesting your prayers, helping your infirmities? Oh, He is good! What evil did you ever have at His dear hands? Well, then, the Father is good, the Son is good and the Holy Spirit is good, so, in a threefold sense we may say, "The Lord is good."

Now, to cheer your faith yet again, let me remind you that *the Lord is good in all His acts of Grace.* Was He not good when first He chose you, when there was nothing in you "to merit esteem, or give the Creator delight"? When you had fallen and lay all in ruins, yet "He loved you not withstanding all"—was He not good then? And when He planned the Covenant, "ordered in all things and sure," the Covenant of Grace by which He could be just and yet be the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus—was He not good then? And when He gave His Son—His only Son—that He might die to make atonement for our sin, was He not good then? And when He washed us in the precious blood of Christ, clothed us with His perfect righteousness, adopted us into His family and, by our regeneration, gave us the nature as well as the privileges of children—when He promised to preserve us even to the end—was it not all goodness? And must we not say of all His acts of Grace, "The Lord is good"? Further, Brothers and Sisters, you may depend upon it that the Lord's actions are all for our benefit. Good men, you know, are much the same all through—cut them where you please, there is something sound about them in every part. I am sure that it is so with God—it is not merely one portion of His Character that is good, but it is *all* good. Nor is it one set of His actions that are good, but *all* His acts are good.

That brings us to this point, that *all His Providences are, have been and always shall be good.* What is the Providence that grieves you just now? Perhaps you have been a great loser this week. Ah, but it is a good God that permitted you to be a loser. You have been bereaved. Ah, but it was not a demon that stole away your darling, but the good God permitted it—did it Himself, maybe, so He is good in that. "I should think Him good," said one to me," if anything else had happened to me except *this*." No, Sister, He is good in that, for if you will have it that He is good in all except only the one thing in which He has dealt with you of late, then,

truly, if He had done something else, you would have been of the same mind! You do not believe Him good, I tell you, unless He is all over and altogether good. The Lord has done for His people the best that could be done. He has not suffered any evil to harm them, neither has He denied them anything that would be for their good. It is still true, "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." A day shall come when these lips shall tell of God's goodness in a much better style than they can at present—up there, in yonder golden streets! But, meanwhile, I have an opportunity I may not have again, for now I am permitted to say, though I have not been second in mourning to any of the bereaved this week, and though thrice the arrows have wounded me, yet the Lord is good and blessed be His name! Though physical pain and mental depression come together, yet the Lord is good.

When I was away in the South of France enjoying health and every comfort, I kept saying to myself and to my friend, "Let us praise God doubly now, for, maybe we shall be in the dark when we get home and, lest we should run short of praise, then, let us give the Lord an extra quantity now." I felt so glad to be, as it were, laying up a little store of honey against the time when flowers would not be quite so plentiful. But I want to use up that store, now, and bless and magnify and adore the name of the Lord!

Let me say to you mourners and sufferers that your praises of God when you have no trouble are not worth half as much as they may be now. If you can sing His praises on the bed of sickness and extol Him in the fire of a sore bereavement, that will be grand! The praises of the angels, as they bow in perfect happiness, and say, "God is good," must be very blessed. And the praises of men of God on earth, who are prospering in business and who have health and strength, and who say, "God is good," are very precious. But you take me to one who is poor and needy, one who scarcely knows where his daily bread will come from—and when he says, "But God is good," I think the Lord finds a sweeter note in that praise than He does even in the music of the angelic choirs! Then go to one who is racked with pain and suffering, and deprived of every comfort—yet I see her stretch out her bony hand and say, "The Lord is good, blessed be His name." That is sweeter music still! But what praise to God there must have been from those martyrs who lay in prison rotting to death, or who were brought out to the stake and who, as they burnt, when every finger was a candle, yet still loved Him, praised Him, and extolled Him! Oh, that is such music as God, Himself, could not create directly and distinctly. God must go round about by redeeming love to get such melody as that1 He has not made a seraph that could so sing—it has to be a fallen and renewed being that could be capable of such love as that, and say, "The Lord is good." I am trying to put this praise into your mouth, but may God put it into your heart! Dear Brother, dear Sister, let this be your continual song, "The Lord is good."

II. Secondly, GOD IS GOOD TO US. What is He to us? "A stronghold in the day of trouble."

It is well to know what God is *under special circumstances.* The special circumstances here mentioned are, "in the day of trouble." Remember that it is *only a day*—it is not a week, nor a month—and God will not permit the devil to add an extra hour to that day. It is a "*day of trouble.*" There is an end to all our griefs. Well did one say—

"When God appoints the number ten,
There never can be eleven."

And when God measures out the bitter medicine to His people, there cannot be another drop of gall put into the cup.

But it really is "*the* day of trouble." See how the emphasis is laid there—"a stronghold in *the* day of trouble." It is the most troublous day that a man has, that day in which the clouds return after the rain, that day in which he seems to have lost every comfort, and sorrows come one after another, like Job's messengers, all bringing gloomy stories—each one more gloomy than those that went before—"*the* day of trouble." There is such a day which occurs to most godly people, sooner or later, before they get to Heaven—"*the* day of trouble." It seems to be trouble's own day. Trouble has the day all to itself. From early in the morning to the last thing at night, it is trouble, trouble, trouble—"*the* day of trouble." What is God *then?* He is a "a stronghold." That is a grand word, "a stronghold"—that is, a fortress, a castle, a tower of defense—"in the day of trouble."

So that, *in the time of trouble, God guarantees safety to His people.* They dwell surrounded as with impregnable bulwarks! "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever." Troubles are like enemies besieging them, but God is to them like a strong tower of defense in which they are perfectly safe!

What is more, they *are often perfectly at peace.* The enemy comes and spies upon them, throws up his earthworks and prepares his engines of war. But thus says the Lord, as He did to Sennacherib, "The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised you and laughed you to scorn. The daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at you." Often, in the times of their greatest trouble, God's people are so resigned, so acquiescent to their Lord's will and, consequently so calm, so brave, that their peace is not in the least degree affected. I had a curious experience in conversing with two ladies who were very deaf. We went for a drive in a carriage and as soon as the rumbling of the wheels began, they could hear everything that I said, so we could easily carry on a conversation while there was a great noise, but inside their own drawing-room it was not so easy for them to hear. And I do believe that, sometimes, when God puts His people into a rumbling tumbler of affliction, they can hear His voice much better than at other times! It seems odd and strange, but it is strangely true—they are most at peace when in the thick of the fight, never so safe as when in danger—and never so much in danger as when apparently safe! God's people are a mass of contradictions, a paradox and a riddle!

Let the Believer read that riddle as he can, for no one else will. He has a stronghold in the day of trouble, giving safety and perfect peace.

Beside that, it is a stronghold *defying the enemy.* The foe comes tearing up the hill, ready to devour the people of God. What makes them safe against the adversary? Why, there is a bastion, a fortification, so that he cannot come near. He grins at the saints and bites his nails, like Bunyan's Giant Pope! He threatens what he will do to them. Like Rabshakeh, he writes ugly letters, but he cannot really do anything. When a man hides behind the Most High, God Himself bids defiance to that man's adversaries, and their rage is all in vain. There came a watery torrent down upon a little mill and threatens to sweep it away, but Wisdom fitted up a wheel and allowed as much of the water as might be needed to turn the wheel and grind the miller's grain. As for the rest, it was turned aside. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise You: the remainder of wrath shall You restrain." So will it be when that great torrent of trouble comes—a part of it shall be used to grind our corn and make us rich and fat in the things of God—the rest of it shall ran harmlessly by. We shall hear its noise, but that shall be all. Therefore, in patience let us possess our souls.

Once more, this stronghold means that *God abides forever the same,* always a sure refuge for the needy. Strongholds are not like temporary camps—fortifications are intended to stand from generation to generation and, in that sense, "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble." Remember what brave Luther did. I think I hear him saying, when the enemy raved and raged around him, "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm, and spite the devil." So they sang, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," and he verily laughed for joy in his holy confidence in his God.

And Luther's God is our God—just the same God as He was then—and He deserves the same confidence from us as He had from Luther! Therefore, let us give it to Him now! Let us praise Him now! Instead of hanging our harps on the willows, let us say, "No, the willows have quite enough weight to bear without having our harps hung on them. And our harps were never made to be hung on willows." Let us strike every string to the praise of that unchanging love which puts the burden on the back and even smites us in love and with wise intent. My Soul, bless you your Lord this very moment and rob Him not of His revenue of praise because you are sad!

III. Now, lastly, we are to think of GOD WITH US—"He knows them that trust in Him."

Of course the Lord knows everything, but there is an emphatic sense in that word, "know," whenever it is applied to God's people. Here it refers to *His intimate acquaintance with them*—their persons, their condition, their needs, their sufferings, their past, their present, their future. He knows all about them. We say, sometimes, to a person whom we do not care to meet, "I do not know you." But we never say that to our own dear child, or to a friend whose concerns interest us. No, we try to know

all about him—we wish to know in order that we may relieve and succor. In a far higher sense, Omniscience concentrates its all-perceiving glance upon each child of God. Your Father is looking at you, Beloved, with as intent a gaze as if there were nobody else in the world but you—yes, and no world, either, but only you. Think how He would know you if, in the whole universe, there were nothing but God and you—just in that way He knows you! He delights to know all about you, for He made you and He new-made you! You are a plant of His planting. He has watched over you and He has said, "I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." It is with the most intimate and intense knowledge that the Lord knows them that trust in Him.

This knowledge also *implies tender care.* Just as a doctor who really cares for a patient, knows all about that patient by making a diagnosis of his condition and studying his symptoms from day to day till he gets to be thoroughly acquainted with him and does not prescribe for him at a venture, so does God care for you with an intense, loving, affectionate, earnest care—wishing to do you good, to make you better—and to turn everything to your benefit. If you are one of those that trust in Him, it is sweet for you to be able to say, "God knows all about me and He cares for me." Do notice one word in the text, "He knows them that *trust* in Him"—not those that are perfect, not those that are doing certain works—but, "He knows them that *trust* in Him."

Those who trust in the Lord are not only the objects of His knowledge and care, they are also *the objects of His approval.* There is nothing in the world that God approves of more than faith. To trust God is the greatest of all works. "What shall we do," said the Jews to our Lord, "that we might work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." To erect a row of almshouses, or to build a cathedral—is not that a big work? No, not compared with *believing on Jesus Christ whom God has sent.* This is the God-like work, the greatest work that we can do! Our action may not please God, however pleasing it may appear to us, but wherever there is faith, God is pleased. And remember, "without faith it is impossible to please Him." So dear Friends, if you want to please God, trust Him, trust Him implicitly! Trust Him now with your sin, with your sorrow, with everything! The more you trust Him, the more pleasing you are to God. See what an opportunity you have of pleasing Him in times of great trial and trouble. If a person has a burden to carry which he is able to bear, self-reliance will serve his turn. But when he has a load upon him that he *cannot* carry, and he says, "O God, if You will strengthen me, I will carry it"—then it is that he is pleasing to God! If you are only reaching what you can reach, there is nothing notable in that—the real thing is to be doing what you cannot do—by believing in God to give you more strength than by nature you possess! To trust God while you are alive is good, but to say with Job. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," that is the very cream of faith! "He knows"—with approving knowledge—"all them that trust in Him."

Once more, dear Friends, this word, "know," here means *loving communion.* We know one another by being with one another, sympathizing with one another, entering into one another's thoughts and feelings. I have known in this sense some of the choicest of God's people—and what a loss it is to lose those whom we have known so well! But God knows us. He knows our prayers and tears, He knows our wishes, He knows that we are not what we want to be, but He knows what we do desire to be. He knows our aspirations, our sighs, our groans, our secret lodgings, our own chastening of spirit when we fail—He has entered into it all. He says, "Yes, dear child, I know all about you. I have been with you when you thought you were alone. I have read what you could not read—the secrets of your own heart that you could not decipher. I have known them all, and I still know them."

And they who trust in the Lord shall have one more thing. That is, *God will acknowledge them as His.* At the Last Great Day, Christ shall say to some, "I never knew you." Those that do not trust Christ, He will not acknowledge. In that dread hour when they will most of all need a Savior, He will say, "I never knew you." But if you trust Him, He knows you now and He will acknowledge you then! Jesus Christ Himself cannot say to me at the last day, "I never knew you." He must know me, for He knows how I have bothered and worried Him! He knows how I had the blood from His heart to wash my sins away and the robe of His righteousness to clothe me. I have needed all that He is to make anything of me and still, day by day I am a poor beggar who will not let Him go down the street without crying, "You, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Therefore He knows my name and Christ will never say that He does not know us if He does. Make Him acquainted with your name even now! Dear Sinner, go and tell the Lord your story and your history, your sin and your transgression. If you confess your sin to Him, He cannot say, "I never knew you." Then go and cast yourself on Him with all your sin—then He will acknowledge you as His and will never disown you!

"He knows them that trust in Him." Trusting in Him gives us a wonderful hold on God. If you trust a man, he feels bound, if he is an honorable man, to be true to the trust reposed in him. If it were a poor person in the street, who had only a few shillings, and was afraid of being robbed, and he were to put his little bit of money in your hand, and say, "Good woman, will you take care of this money of mine?"—you would take care of it, would you not? You would do anything rather than lose it. And Christ will keep that which we have committed unto Him. Last Monday night, one of our Brothers, a neighboring minister, told us that, 45 years ago, he gave his soul to Christ and, he said, "It has been like a sealed envelope ever since." I like that thought of the seal that has never been broken. The devil has never been able to get at the good man's soul. It has been a sealed envelope ever since his conversion—and so it shall be until the day of his Lord's appearing, when Christ shall break the seal and reveal to the assembled worlds what He has kept!

Oh, give yourselves to Jesus, dear Hearts! Give yourselves to Jesus! Now that so many are being taken away from us to Heaven, I want to have a great number coming into the Church to fill up the vacuum. During the last few weeks that I have been ill and have been away, I have not been able to see any of you, but I intend, as soon as I can, to see such as wish to make a confession of their faith in Christ. I hope that there are many of you ready to come and that among the rest will be one or another able to say, "Yes, Sir, the Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble. And I now know that He knows them that trust in Him—and I have the witness of the Spirit that I am one of that happy company." God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 77.

The Book of Psalms, though it is Divinely Inspired, is also marvelously human—it is everywhere instinct with life—and life in its most sympathetic forms. However glad you are, there is always a Psalm suitable for you to sing. And you are never so sad but a Psalm could be found to help you, in the very depths, to pour out your complaint before God. This 77th Psalm is the song of a man in deep depression.

Verse 1. *I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and He gave ear unto me.* It was only a cry. A monotonous cry, redoubled and full of sorrow. Yet the Lord gave ear unto him who cried. There were some who would have stopped their ears and have got out of the way, for the sound made them melancholy and they could not bear it. But the Lord gave ear unto His sad servant's cry. Oh, how sweet is this! Though He hears the songs of angels and though the hallelujahs of the blood-bought in Glory never cease before Him, yet He stoops from His throne of majesty and listens to the cry of misery! "He gave ear unto me." Are any of you troubled? Pour out your hearts before the Lord and He will give ear unto you as He did to the writer of this Psalm!

2. *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord.* That was a very wise thing to do! Where else should he go, in the day of trouble, but to Him who sent the trouble, to Him who could help him to bear the trouble, to Him who could sanctify the trouble, to Him who could, if He pleased, remove the trouble? "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord." I have heard of some who fly to strong drink to drown their troubles—that will never do—it is like leaping into the fire to escape the flame! Some run to their fellow creatures for comfort—that is a poor way of acting—better by far do as the Psalmist said he did, "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord."

2, 3. *My sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled.* Yet he says that he sought God. It is a grand thing when your faith leads you to seek God, even though He troubles you! It is better to knock at God's door when He is angry than to go to any other door! Even if He shuts the door in your

face, still wait upon Him. Though He may seem not to heed your cry, there is no door like that of God's! Therefore, continue there. Yet there are times when even Believers in God are so conscious of sin, so conscious of departure from Him by unbelief towards Him, that, as they remember God, they are troubled.

3-5. *I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah. You hold my eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.* What God did with others of His people in their times of trouble, how He rescued them, the splendor of His power in the ages long since gone—these are among the things which the Psalmist considered. It is well, sometimes, to live in the past. If the present seems to be like a fire that has gone out, snatch a live coal from the altars of the past and set the fuel alight again.

6. *I call to remembrance my song in the night.* "How I was once like a nightingale and learned to sing with a thorn at my breast. How, in former times, I triumphed in the hour of trouble and affliction." It is good to remember all this, for, though past experience will not do to *live* upon, yet sometimes we are like the men with their barges when they push backwards to send the barge forward. We may think of the past to help us in the present.

6, 7. *I commune with my own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more?* Come, what do you think? Will such a loving, faithful God as ours cast us off forever? Can you harbor such a thought concerning Him? Will He be favorable no more after all the favor He has already shown? Can He change? Will He deny Himself? Do you think that God will play fast and loose with you? "Will He be favorable no more?"

8. *Is His mercy clean gone forever?* We sing, "His mercy endures forever!" Is that a lie? Can it be?

8. *Does His promise fail forevermore?* Does it ever fail at all? And if it does tarry a while, will it always wait? Will God, at last, be found untrue? Come, children of God, in your trouble face these questions and answer them—for you must get comfort out of the only reply that you can give to them.

9. *Has God forgotten to be gracious?* Is He the same God that He used to be? Or has He been overtaken with a fit of forgetfulness? Has He a failing memory, like yours and mine?

9. *Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah.* Can it be? Has He not said, "as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you"? Can it be, then, that in anger He has shut up His tender mercies?

10. *And I said, This is my infirmity.* And so it is. Worse than that, it is sometimes our iniquity, our sin, to think such hard things of God! But inasmuch as faith was there, battling, struggling and striving, the little temporary victory which unbelief seemed to gain was the result of infirmity.

10. *But I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.* The glorious years of His electing love. The years in which He has loved His people and never changed that love. The years in which we, ourselves, have realized His Presence and been at His right hand enjoying, day by day, a sense of His love.

11, 12. *I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will meditate also on all Your works, and talk of Your doings.* They will bear talking of, they will bear turning over and meditating upon, for they are full of comfort.

13, 14. *Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God? You are the God that does wonders: You have declared Your strength among the people.* Whenever the Hebrew mind was full of exulting joy concerning God's greatness and might, it seemed inevitably to turn back to Egypt and the Red Sea. Just as we, Believers in Jesus, love to sing the song of the Lamb, so did these old Believers sing it by anticipation! We may fitly join with them and together we may sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb. Here is a part of it.

15. *You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.* There is no song like that of redemption! Whatever our troubles may be—if we are trusting in Christ, we are a redeemed people! Whatever our sins or infirmities, or imperfections—we are a redeemed people, like Israel of old! They were redeemed by power, as well as by price, so we read—

16-18. *The waters saw You, O God, the waters saw You; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: Your arrows also went abroad. The voice of Your thunder was in the Heaven: the lightning lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.* This is what Egypt saw when God turned the dark side of the cloud towards the Egyptians and greatly troubled them through that wild tempestuous night!

19, 20. *Your way is in the sea, and Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known. You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.* And so will He continue to lead His people by one and another, till all their wanderings are over and they rest in peace at His right hand forever. "Therefore, comfort one another with these words."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—194, 690, 744.

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LIFE PROVED BY LOVE
NO. 2556

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 18, 1883.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life,
because we love the brethren."
1 John 3:14.

I HAVE heard it said, by those who would be thought philosophers, that in religion we must believe, but cannot know. I am not very clear about the distinction they draw between knowledge and faith, nor do I care to enquire because I assert that, in matters relating to religion, we *do* know! In the things of God, we both believe and know. If you will read this Epistle through and, with a pencil draw a line under the word, "know," wherever it occurs, you will be astonished to see how John continually asserts about the great Truths of our faith, "We know, we know, we know, we know." He does not admit that any one of these things is the subject of conjecture, but he asserts it to be a matter of positive knowledge. These philosophical gentlemen call themselves Agnostics—that is a word derived from the Greek and has the same meaning as the word, "ignoramus," which comes from the Latin—and is the English equivalent for a "know-nothing." Well, if they like to be called ignoramuses, I have not the slightest objection to their keeping the title, but they should never presume to argue with Christian men! They put themselves out of court, directly, for we say, "*We know*." They cannot deny anything we choose to affirm, after that, because confessedly they do *not know*. If we do know and they cannot allege against us that we are deceivers—if, in any court of law they will admit that our testimony would be taken quite as quickly as theirs, and that our general repute is that we are as upright and as honest as they are—then they ought, in modesty, never to contradict us in anything, but to believe what we declare to be true.

As they do not know anything, themselves, let them be guided by those who *do* know. At any rate, whether they choose to agree with us or not, we shall always affirm that we know what we know! And there are some things about God, and about the future, and about prayer and about the work of the Spirit of God in our own souls which we do not fancy, or imagine, or even make to be merely matters of faith. We know them, we are sure of them, for we have felt them, tasted them, handled them—and we know them as surely as we know the fact of our own existence. My text seems to me to speak of four things about which Believers in Christ are and ought to be positive and certain.

I. First, WE KNOW THAT ONCE WE WERE DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS. That is implied in the text—"We know that we have passed from death unto life." We could not have passed *from* death if we were not *in* death. Neither would there have been a change in bringing us into life if we were in life before. Herein, I believe, lies the Doctrine of the Natural Ruin of Man—his original sin, the depravity of his heart. I have heard it said that the children of some Christians are so very good—I suppose on account of their having such wonderfully good fathers and mothers—that they may be considered to have been *born* in the Church. They, I am assured, have no need of any conversion, and they never ought to need it. There are such principles within the dear little souls that you have only to nourish those blessed principles and they will turn into veritable angels! I have seen some of these children and I regret to say that I have not found them different in nature from other people's boys and girls, neither have they grown up to be better than the children of the most ungodly. I believe, concerning everybody's child, that it must be born again, that the Spirit of God must change its natural heart if it is to become a child of God. At any rate, whatever may be the theory as regards other people, we know that *we* were once dead in sin—we have no question about that!

We who have been converted and become the subjects of the work of the Spirit of God know that we were once fast bound in spiritual death—*at one time we were utterly insensible.* We heard the Word of God and were pleased, perhaps, with the oratory of the speaker, or moved by his earnestness. But we were never led, by all his pleadings, to hate sin and to believe in Christ. We were shaken, but we were not awakened. We were insensible, spiritually, to the power of the Law of God. We heard it preached and we might be, for a moment, disquieted, but we never felt the terror of the condemnation which God pronounces upon the sinner who breaks His Law. If we did feel anything of it, we strived to get away from its influence—and drowned in pleasure and in sin all thoughts of the wrath of God. We could also hear the Gospel, as well as the Law, and the sweetest note in it had no music for our ears. What cared we for Jesus and His bleeding wounds? What respect had we for Infinite Love and the invitations of the precious Word? We came and we went, yet continued just as we were. We saw our face in the glass, but we did not wash it—and the spots of sin still remained.

Some of you, dear Friends, remember that you had grown so insensible to spiritual things that you did not even care to hear the Gospel. The Sabbath was to some of you just like any other day in the week, except that, sometimes, you took most of your pleasure that day—which meant that you went further in sin than you ordinarily did—for your daily labor kept you pretty steady through the week. You know how often Sunday brought "St. Monday" after it, with all sorts of mischief in its train—the Sabbath became to you rather a door of sin than a gate of mercy. Some of you had godly parents, yet you took no notice of your father's God and your mother's Savior. You saw others go to the House of Prayer, but you were in your shirt-sleeves all the morning. And in the evening you "did not care to go," you said, "to be stirred up with a crowd to listen to dry

talk." Just so—all this was because you were quite insensible to Divine things. Charm he ever so wisely, the charmer cannot allure the deaf adder and, for a time, the Gospel's charming music could not reach your ears. That was one proof of your being dead—that you were spiritually insensible.

More than that, we *had not the appetites of living men and women.* You know that if a man is alive, he will be hungry, in due time. There is a bell that is sure to ring inside to tell him that it is time to coal up and set the fires going again. He will be thirsty, too. The body will need moisture and there will be a summons for him to drink if he is alive. He may be just on the borders of life, perhaps almost gone, and then hunger and thirst may be forgotten, but the healthy man has these tokens of life about him at fit seasons—that he must eat and drink. There was a time when you and I had no hunger for the Bread of Life. "Pshaw," we said, "what cant! What nonsense!" We did not desire to drink of "the river of the Water of Life." We did not believe in its existence and, though now every drop of the Gospel is sweet to us as honey, we cared not an atom about it once! We despised the Doctrines of Grace and we did not wish for the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself! He who is the Bread of Heaven was without any attraction for us—we did not feel any need of Him. We thought that we were strong and could find our own way into Heaven. We did not know our own weakness nor His strength. We believed that we were fat and flourishing and, therefore, we did not need to feed upon Him. It is perfectly true that with regard to Grace and all spiritual things, we were dead! "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." But dead are they unto whom no spiritual hunger or thirst ever comes! This was the second proof of our spiritual death.

There was this further evidence that *we were without power of movement of a spiritual kind.* You remember the philosopher who was asked to prove that he lived and he did it by simply walking? *Movement* is a proof of life. Certainly, *spiritual* movement proves spiritual life. To draw near to You, my God, proves that I am alive. To approach You—though it is with faltering steps, like a tottering infant who any moment may fall—yet, to draw near to You, though I do but crawl like a baby of a few months old, proves that I am alive! The movement of godly desire, the movement of a humble hope, the movement of a holy wish, the movement of a penitential sigh or cry—if there are any of these in the soul—they are proofs of life. It is not so very long ago since some of you had none of them. I had the great delight, yesterday, of seeing many who have just lately been quickened by Divine Grace. Many of them, as they looked me in the face with holy shame, told how dead they had been towards God—they were alive, indeed, unto transgression and unrighteousness—but stone dead as to any movement of the Spirit of God who now has made them alive in Christ Jesus!

There is another sign which proves *death*, namely, *the lack of breath.* That is one of the last tokens of expiring life. You have heard of friends holding a mirror to the man's mouth and, as long as there is a little dimness to be seen upon the glass, they say, "He still lives." But when the breath is all gone, then the life has gone. The poet truly said—

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,"

but there was a time with us when we did not pray. Perhaps some of you, from your childhood, always said a form of prayer and if you ever went to bed without saying it, you dared not go to sleep. Yet how much of that formality was but a mockery of God! I will not speak too harshly about the child's form of prayer, for sometimes that form has been made use of by God to lead on to true spiritual supplication. Still, it would be idle for us to imagine that the mere repetition of certain words was prayer—we know, now, that it was *not* prayer. We did not really ask anything of God, we did not truly speak to God at all—we might just as well have said our prayers backward, as forward, for any good there was in them! I have heard of some people who, even at 30 and 40 years of age, have repeated the same form of prayer that they used when they were children. I have even read of one who, at 60 or 70, used to pray God to bless his father and mother who had been dead 30 years! When men once get into the way of using a form of prayer, they are apt to keep to that form when there is positively no meaning whatever in it. That is the state in which some of us were—we used dead prayers, for there was no life in us.

Ah, but it is not so now, Beloved! Now, we *pray*. I think that some of us could more easily tell when we pray than when we do not pray. As we walk the crowded streets, we cry to God in secret, "Oh, that You would be with me!" We cannot read a book without praying that we may have help from God to spy out the meaning. We do not even go to look at a baby without pleading with God to save the soul of that dear child. We feel habitually in the spirit of prayer. If it is not so with any of us, we ought to pray that it may be so! Mark you, the *spirit* of prayer is better than any mere *act* of prayer. The act of prayer is good, the habit of prayer is good, but to have the *spirit* of prayer always with us so that we as naturally pray as we breathe—this is the highest blessing of all—and one of the surest signs of spiritual life!

I grieve to add, but it is true of some of us in a very special degree, that we know we were dead in sin because we *had begun to corrupt.* If a man has lost his life for only a certain number of hours, he may still look very much as he did and, if the eyes were the only guide, we might scarcely know whether he was a living man or not. But that appearance will not last many days—you soon perceive the signs of an inward dissolution. Corruption is beginning to take possession of the place which death has conquered and, very soon, you will have to say, "Bury my dead out of my sight." It happened to some of us to be, in our salvation, like the little girl to whom Christ went soon after the breath was out of her body. He took her by the hand and said, "Talitha, cumi"—"Maid, arise"—and she lived again before corruption had worked any great change within her. Happy are they who are saved in their youth, before the inward death has begun to show itself in outward corruption! Yet, some of us who were converted while we were yet boys, remember enough of our wanderings to make us fear what we might have been if Grace had not interposed.

I have often told the story of Rowland Hill and the good Scotchman who sat for some time looking at the preacher's face and at the strange, comic twinkling about his eyes. "What are you doing?" he asked. "I am

looking at the lines of your face," said the Scotchman. "And what do you make of them?" "Oh, I was thinking what a bad fellow you would have become if it had not been for the Grace of God." And some of us, as we look back at the lines of our young character before it was allowed to develop, cannot help saying to ourselves, "What great sinners we would have been but for the Grace of God!" There were already tokens of commenced corruption.

But there are others in whom the corruption has become more apparent. They have gone into actual transgression and have become familiar with what are called the pleasures of this world—its vanities, gaieties and pollutions. They have not been worse than others. Indeed, even while dead in sin, they compliment themselves that they are not so bad as others! Yet they would not like to have their secret deeds proclaimed before the face of all men, as they will be at the Judgment Day! They would be ashamed to have them known. You, my Friend, are like that young man who was carried out at the gate of Nain, whom Christ met on the way to the sepulcher and raised from the dead. You are dead, surely enough, but there are some others who are dead, like Lazarus, who had lain four days in the grave—and of whom his sister said, "Lord, by this time he stinks." God's Grace has come to some who will easily recognize my description of them—when they were as far gone in evil as they could be. There was not any other sin left for them to commit! They had sinned up to their neck—they had plunged into it and done as much evil as they could. Rottenness was in their very soul, corruption was in everything they said, for it was full of obscenity and blasphemy. It was in all they did, for the more nauseous the sin was in the nostrils of God, the more pleasing it was to them! There are some here who will always say, "I know that I was dead, for I was corrupt. Death had set his seal upon me with a stamp that could not be mistaken. I was, indeed, dead before God, for I had begun to be offensive even in the nostrils of good men."

That will suffice for this part of our subject. Let us look back with shame on our original. Let us remember the hole of the pit from where we were dug and then stand fast in this one certainty—we know that we were dead.

II. Secondly, we know another thing and a brighter thing—WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE UNDERGONE A VERY AMAZING CHANGE—"We know that we have passed from death unto life."

That passage, "from death unto life," is *the reverse of the natural one.* We all expect to pass from life unto death. The heathen talks of a Charon to ferry men across the river into the unseen world. Long ago the poet said, "Easy is the descent to Avernus. But to retrace your steps—that is the work, *that* is the difficulty." Yet that is just what God has done for us who believe! We have not gone from life to death, but He has brought us up from death unto life! There has been such a change in us as is altogether supernatural, such a change as never would have occurred had we been left to ourselves. We now are sure that it is so. I speak to some in whom the change is so evident to themselves that they often wonder at it. One of the surest proofs to any man of the existence of a God consists in His dealings with that man in turning him front darkness to light, and

from the power of sin and Satan, unto God. All the arguments that ever were written by Butler, or Paley, or any of the defenders of religion, will never convince a man like coming into personal dealings with God. And when those dealings assume this form—that we have passed from death unto life—they become indisputable proofs of the Godhead and of the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

I do not think that it is easy to describe the passage from life to death. I could not describe it, though I have seen many pass away. And *it is almost impossible to describe the passage from death unto life.* I know what it is, as you do, Brothers and Sisters, many of you. It has happened in your own case, yet you could not explain it. What a wonderful process it is! It is not dying—it is quite the reverse—it is being quickened. Can you tell another person how it happened? You can speak of the outward means and the external circumstances, but you cannot picture to anyone the secret way of the Spirit. His methods of quickening are deep mysteries and even he who has felt them cannot translate them into human language. Yet believe us, O Unbelievers, we are before you, men and women as different from what we used to be as though we had died and risen from the dead! We are, some of us here, so changed and altered that if we met our old selves, we would not know them! We are no longer ourselves, though now most truly we are ourselves by the effectual working of the almighty Grace of God!

We can tell you, however, that *this passing from death unto life usually begins with pain.* I have heard that when men have been nearly drowned and animation has been restored by rubbing and other processes, their first sensation was that of intense anguish. When the blood began to move, again, and the lungs began gently to heave, the first feeling was one of great pain. You know how, if your foot, "goes to sleep," as we say, when it begins to get right, again, what pain there often is! That is, on a very small scale, what happens to a man who is being resuscitated—it is just a faint picture of the pain that is usually felt by those who pass from death to life. Yet let me lay down no hard and fast rule! I am not giving a description that is to be stereotyped, but I only say what usually happens. I do not know that the little girl, to whom the Lord Jesus said, "Talitha, cumi," had any pain at all. I expect that she just opened her eyes and sat up, and as soon as she saw that it was Jesus, she wanted to wait upon Him, but He commanded that something should be given her to eat. And there are some dear children and some persons of older age who are brought to Jesus very gently. There are not so many pangs in their birth as there are in the births of others—yet they are as truly regenerated and born into the family of God. Still, I think that the new life usually begins with pain.

One of the first signs of it is that *it is accompanied with great self-depreciation.* The man who is passing from death to life grows very little in his own esteem. He gets to despise what he once thought to be his beauty and his comeliness. As to his supposed excellence, he is not half the man he thought he was! He would never have been able to go through the needle's eye while he was such a size as that, so he had to

be reduced and then still further reduced till he became less than nothing in his own eyes.

At the same time, when that life really does begin in a soul, *it begin very quickly.* There may be, at first, only enough light to make the darkness visible, only enough life to incarnate itself in a sigh. The prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner," is rather a large-sized form of the heavenly life. Sometimes the poor, trembling soul cannot get as far as that. Yet, not a single spark of the Divine Life ever dies out, or ever can. The living and incorruptible seed of the Word of God lives and abides forever! If it is but as a grain of mustard seed and it falls into the ground which God has prepared for it, it must live and it must grow! But, often, it is at first exceedingly weak. The test of its reality is that the man trusts in Jesus, for "he that believes on the Son has everlasting life." That is a sure Word of God, for He has, Himself, spoken it: "Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." The renewed man, however feeble his life may be, does believe in Jesus and, therefore, he is saved!

When that life comes to the birth, *it is usually attended with great joy.* When at last the man has believed in Jesus, and rested in Him, then he passes from darkness to light in the sense of passing from sorrow into overflowing joy! It is not always so, but that is the general way—there is a joy unspeakable and full of glory which attends this passing from death unto life—it is a period to which a man may always look back with gratitude to God. I am always glad when our friends get a very decided conversion because, though I am not going to say a word about those who come to Christ very gradually, yet their experience is rather cloudy. No doubt they are just as safe as others, but they lack a good deal of comfort afterwards and, sometimes, persons who are very readily converted and who have no very deep sense of sin, are more apt to play with evil than others are who have had a clearer sight of its enormity. So, we know—however it came to pass—we *know* that we have undergone a very amazing change!

III. Thirdly, we know something else. WE KNOW THAT WE LIVE—"We know that we have passed from death unto life."

In that life, first of all, is included *non-condemnation.* A man who is condemned to die can hardly be said to live, but he who has believed in Jesus Christ knows that there is, for him, no condemnation! Nothing shall ever be laid to his charge, for all his sins were punished on Christ—a full atonement was made for them—and they were forever put away. This we know, and we rejoice to know it—it is the very glory and bliss of our life!

We live now, dear Friends, in this way—*we have entered into a new state of being.* We have made the acquaintance of a great many things that we did not know anything of before. "All things have become new." "Ah, Sir," said one to me once, "either all the world has altered, or else I have, for people I once delighted in I am now afraid of. The things that once made me glad, now make me unhappy, and those that I thought melancholy are now the very things in which I find my highest joy." Yes, we have not merely to talk about God, now, but to *know* Him! Not simply to speak about Christ, but to *live* in Him! Not now to *dream* or read

about the Spirit of God, but to *feel* Him working in us! We have come now to know the blood of Jesus as applied to our souls to make us clean—the promises are now our riches and prayer is a reality to us! We never need anybody to tell us that there is a power in prayer, for we have tokens from day to day that the Lord hears our petitions. We are living in a new world altogether, we know we are! These things were unknown and unperceived by us once, but they are perceived by us now.

Beside that, we *are now introduced into spiritual society.* I hardly know how to explain the great change to some here, but suppose you had been a pig all your life and that you were suddenly made into a man. Well, now you are a man, you look through a telescope—swine cannot do that. You look through a microscope—I never knew a pig do that in my life. Swine do not talk, but you speak, you sing, you pray, you are quite a different creature from what you were before. It is just so with some of us—we have another life than we ever possessed before, we live in a different world to what we used to live in, we know things that were unknowable to us once, we enjoy what we never had enjoyed and we have griefs that never occurred to us before we passed from death unto life. By all these things we know that we do really live.

Further, *this new life necessitates new food.* We feel, now, an appetite which nothing but Christ can satisfy! We love the House of God, we delight in God's Word, and when the Holy Spirit blesses us, then are we filled as with marrow and fatness! We believe, too, that *this life guarantees to us eternal life*—that, in fact, *it is eternal life*—life that can never die, or be taken away from us. Let me tell you, my un-converted Friend, that we are very happy! "But," you say, "you said that you had sorrows which we do not have." Exactly so. Men, you know, have sorrows which swine do not have. Do I compare you to swine? Well, if you do not like that image, I cannot help it. I will take any other that is true, but there is as great a difference between a living Christian and a mere man as there is between a living man and a dog. He has another life, a higher life and he has entered another realm. I would not try to teach a dog astronomy and it is impossible for an unrenewed man to know the things of God. I should not think of putting my dog into a chair and beginning to explain theology to him—and until you are born again, you will never understand the meaning of God's Grace. You must get a new life, pass from death unto life, or you cannot know these things. But we who believe in Jesus know that we have this life.

IV. Now, fourthly, WE KNOW THAT WE LIVE BECAUSE WE LOVE.

The enquiry as to whether we are alive or not is a very curious thing. This morning I received a letter informing me that the High Court of Chancery has ordered investigation, with affidavit, as to whether "the said Charles Haddon Spurgeon" is still alive. I replied to the lawyer that I would not make an affidavit to that effect, for I would not take an oath for any purpose, but that I was willing most solemnly to affirm that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, I am still alive. And I expect to have to do that before long. I did not say to myself, "Am I really alive or not?" But I have known some Christian people, who have so often sung—

"'Tis a point I long to know"—

which all of us have to sing some time or other—that they are not sure whether they are alive or not! Making themselves sad, miserable and melancholy, they think is a proof of life. Perhaps it is, but there are other proofs of life beside that, and I like the one that is given in the text—"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

So, Brothers and Sisters, if we can say that *we love God's people, as God's people, because they are God's people,* that is a mark that we have passed from death unto life! Do you love them *for Christ's sake?* Do you say to yourself, "That is one of Christ's people. That is one who bears Christ's Cross. That is one of the children of God and, therefore, I love him and take delight in his company"? Then that is an evidence that you are not of the world. If you were, you would love the world, but, belonging to Christ, you love those who are Christ's and you love them for Christ's sake.

Another is you love them *for the Truth of God's sake.* We are but earthen vessels, yet there is the excellency of the treasure of God put within us, so, when you can say, "I love that man because of the Truth of God he preaches. I do not care about his talents, but I do care about his Gospel"—when you can say, "I love that woman, I delight to hear her speak of Jesus, her experience comforts me because it is full of Christ." Or, "I love to read the writings of such a Brother because there is a savor of Christ about *every* letter that he writes"—that is a mark that you have passed from death unto life. If you love the children, you love the Father, I am pretty sure of that. And if you love Him, it is because He first loved you!

It is another mark of our passing from death unto life when we love God's people *for their own sake,* when we wish that we were like they are, when we say to ourselves, "I would gladly be the least among them, washing their feet and filling the humblest place, so that I might share the love which is their joy." It is a sure token that you are a child of God when you love God's people even *when the world hates them,* taking their part, being willing to be reproached with them. When you say, "You scoff at such a saint, do you? I am one of the same family, so give me some of your scorn! If you have any rotten stuff to fling and you set this Christian man in the pillory, I will stand by his side and count it a great honor to share the contempt that comes upon a child of God." If you thus love the saints, you need not be afraid whether you have passed from death unto life.

It is also a sure mark of Grace when *we love the company of God's people* as a people, when we are willing to go to the little Prayer Meeting to hear them pray, when we hear them groaning and yet feel, "That is just the kind of sorrow that I would like to feel." When we hear them joyful and say, "That is the kind of joy I want to feel." When we hear them tell about what the Lord has done for them, and though we have not felt quite the same joy, ourselves, yet say, "I love them because the Lord has loved them. If He has not yet worked all this in me, I love them because He has worked it in them. I rejoice to see my Father's finger anywhere, on anyone, whoever he may be." Well, if that is your case, go your way in

peace! It seems but a very small token of the inward life that we love the Brothers and Sisters, yet it is one of the surest in the world, and it is one of which even you high and mighty saints may be glad to avail yourselves in the cloudy and dark day which, sooner or later, may come upon you.

God grant us all to have a share in this precious knowledge, for Christ's sake! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 32.

A Psalm of David, giving instruction. The 32nd Psalm is a Gospel benediction. It belongs not to the law—it is a word which can only come of Sovereign Grace to the guilty. The very first sentence tells us that.

Verse 1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* Blessed would have been the man who never transgressed, who never sinned, but, be encouraged, O Sinner, there is blessedness even for the likes of you! Blessed is he who, though he has transgressed, has had his transgression forgiven—who, though he has sinned, and sinned often, and sinned foully, yet, nevertheless, has had his sin covered. There is such blessedness in this forgiveness that scarcely can the bliss of an unfallen spirit excel it! There is a tenderness, a delicacy, a fragrance, a love about the dealings of God with pardoned sinners that even angels can scarcely tell the excessive sweetness of it! They have never known the joy of redeeming Grace and dying love and, although they are blessed, yet peculiarly and especially is he blessed "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* He is blessed twice over. God multiplies the blessing. He blesses him effectually, He blesses him emphatically, He blesses him in body, He blesses him in soul. He is blessed! He has iniquities, but God does not impute them to him. They have been of old imputed to Another who stood in the sinner's place, bore the sinner's guilt and put it all away by His own expiatory sufferings! Therefore, as these deeds were put to Christ's account, they are not laid to the account of the Lord's people! "Blessed is the man unto whom Jehovah imputes not iniquity." But even pardon and deliverance from guilt would not be sufficient to make a man blessed if they stood alone, for, as long as our heart is full of sin and deceit and follows crooked ways, there can be no true rest to us. Therefore the blessedness comes to the man "in whose spirit there is no guile"—no falsehood. The guile and the guilt have gone together and the gall is gone, too. Now the man is truthful, so he confesses his sin. He is also trustful, so he lays hold on the sinner's Substitute and thus he finds peace. Dear Friends, do you all know this blessedness? If you do not, I pray that you may, for it is Heaven begun below—the Heaven of a poor sinner whose sin is covered and whose heart is purified from guile. Now see the way by which we come to this blessedness—

3. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.* Sin was in his heart but he would not confess it. He was silent before God in hardness of heart and then his sorrow grew worse and

worse, till not only his flesh began to fail, but his bones—the most solid part of his frame began to grow old, too. He felt like a man prematurely aged, melting away into the grave.

4. *For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* When a man gets God's hand on him, I guarantee you that he will want no other burden! This hand of God goes with him wherever he goes, it is like his own shadow. Whenever you meet with persons who are self-righteous, you may pray God to lay his hand on them—that will drive the pride and unbelief out of them. David says that he was so pressed under God's hand that the very essence of his soul was squeezed out of him.

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sins. Selah.* "And You forgave"—blessed, "and!" How very simple it was! The floods of Divine Wrath were swelling. David just pulled up the sluices of confession, the floods ran away, and all was quiet! Oh, what a simple plan this is! But pride cannot stand it—to humble oneself and confess before God that one is utterly undone and ruined and sinful—our proud spirit will not bring itself to do if it can help it. Yet that is the way of peace. Down, down, down, flat on your face! "He that is down need fear no fall." But we do not like that going down, that acknowledgment of transgression. Still, we must come to it and the sooner, the better. The Lord bring every proud soul here to a full acknowledgment and confession of sin—and then forgiveness will surely follow.

6. *For this shall everyone who is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him.* The fact that God hears us at the first and gives us a great deliverance when we are under a sense of sin, makes us pray to Him as long as we live. We shall never forget how God heard us then—and something whispers into our heart, "He heard you then. He will hear you now." One thing I know, if you do not—I can never come to God again in such a plight as I came to Him at the first. Whatever happens to me—if I am bereaved a thousand times—if I am covered from head to foot with sores and sit like Job on a dunghill—I can never be brought so low as I was when, in my despair, I was ready to lay violent hands on myself rather than live any longer under a sense of sin! I looked unto Him and I was lightened—and that first grand deliverance ensures that, in every other time of trial, in every other flood of great waters, when I cry unto God, He will deliver me!

7. *You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.* Here is a threefold declaration. "You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance." "Yes," says God, "I will." And now He speaks to His servant. When we speak to God, we may expect that God will speak to us. And what a happy dialog it is when a soul can pray, and praise, and magnify the Lord—and then the Lord condescends to speak to His poor servant after this fashion!

8. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go.* "I have led you so far. I have brought you up out of the horrible pit and out

of the miry clay. I will not let you perish, now. I will not leave you to your own folly."

8. *I will guide you with My eyes.* It is a very gentle way of guidance when a mistress just turns her eyes towards her servant, who understands her without a word. So God is quite willing to guide His people with His eyes if they are willing to be so guided.

9. *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 unto you.* Alas, there are some hard-mouthed Christians! They will not take a hint from God. They do not watch God's eyes and so do not learn by that gentle means and, therefore, they require to have a bit and a bridle—and such things are not at all nice in one's mouth. Some Christians must always be in trouble, or else they would be in sin. It seems as if some could never be allowed a furlough from sorrow, or else they would spend it in the tents of wickedness—"Be you not as the horse, or as the mule." Be tender-mouthed. Be willing to be guided. Yield to the gentle admonitions of the Divine Spirit that you may have a truly happy life.

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.* It is all merriment with them now—they "count it one of the wisest things, to drive dull care away." But hark to this knell of all their joys, "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked." If not today, or tomorrow, yet by-and-by, and in that day it shall be so. All the future is dark to the wicked. The further they go, the worse they will grow.

10. *But he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.* "He that trusts in the Lord"—he is the very opposite of the wicked. Do you trust in the Lord, my Friend? If not, you will have to be put among the wicked, for there are only two sorts of people in the world—the wicked and those that trust in the Lord! If you are not a believer in Christ, you must go with the other company. "He that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." Mercy shall go all round him, before him, behind him, above him, beneath him, within him and around him everywhere! As you see the moon, sometimes, with a halo around it, so shall you be—you shall have brightness within and round about you, mercy shall compass you about.

11. *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.* If anybody has a right to be glad, you have! So indulge the gladness and magnify the name of the Lord.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—30, 561, 560.

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A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 21, 1883.

"The Almighty has vexed my soul."
Job 27:2.

THE word, "who," was put into this verse by the translators, but it is not needed. It is better as I have read it to you, "The Almighty has vexed my soul." The marginal reading is, perhaps, a more exact translation of the original—"The Almighty has embittered my soul." From this we learn that a good man may have his soul vexed. He may not be able to preserve the serenity of his mind. We think and think rightly, that a Christian man should "glory in tribulations, also," and rise superior to all outward afflictions. But it is not always so with us. It is necessary, sometimes, that we should be "in heaviness through manifold temptations." Not only are the temptations needed for the trial of our faith, but it is even necessary that we should be in heaviness through them. I hardly imagine that the most quiet and restful Believers have always been unruffled. I can scarcely think that even those whose peace is like a river have always been made to flow on with calm and equable current. Even to rivers there are rapids and cataracts, and so, I think, in the most smoothly-flowing life, there surely must be breaks of distraction and of distress. At any rate, it was so with Job. His afflictions, aggravated by the accusations of his so-called friends, at last made the iron enter into his very soul and his spirit was so troubled that he cried, "The Almighty has embittered my soul!"

It is also clear, from our text, that a good man may trace the vexation of his soul distinctly to God. It was not merely that Job's former troubles had come from God, for he had borne up under them—when all he had was gone, he had still blessed the name of the Lord with holy serenity. But God had permitted these three eminent and distinguished men, mighty in speech, to come about him, to rub salt into his wounds, and so to increase his agony. At first, too, God did not seem to help him in the debate, although afterwards He answered all the accusations of Job's friends and put them to the rout. Yet, for a time, Job had to stand like a solitary champion against all three of them and, against young Elihu, too. So he looked up to Heaven and he said, "The Almighty has embit-

tered my soul. That is the end of the controversy. I can see from where all my troubles come."

Advancing a step further, we notice that in all this, Job did not rebel against God, or speak a word against Him. He swore by that very God who had vexed his soul. See how it stands here—"As God lives, who has taken away my judgment, and the Almighty, who has vexed my soul." He stood fast to it that this God was the true God. He called Him good, he believed Him to be almighty—it never occurred to Job to bring a railing accusation against God, or to start aside from his allegiance to Him. He is a truly brave man who can say with Job, "'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' Let God deal with me as He will, yet He is good and I will praise His name. What if He has vexed my soul? He has a right to vex me, so I will not kick against the pricks. Let Him grieve me, let Him put gall and wormwood into my cup if so it shall please Him, but still will I magnify His name, for He is good and only good." Here is the strength of the saints—here is the glory which God gets out of true Believers—that they cannot and will not be soured against their God!

Now go another step and notice that this embittering of Job's soul was intended for his good. The Patriarch was to have his wealth doubled and he, therefore, needed double Grace that he might be able to bear the burden. He was also to be a far holier man than he had been at the first. Perfect and upright as he seemed to be, he was to rise a stage higher. If his character had been deficient in anything, perhaps it was deficient in humility. Truly Job was no proud man, he was generous, kind and meek, but, possibly, he had a little too high a notion of his own character, so even *that* must be taken away from him. Other Divine Graces must be added to those he already possessed. He must have a tenderness of spirit which appears to have been lacking. He must become as gentle as a maid. As he had been firm as a man of war, consequently, this bitterness of soul was meant to help him towards perfection of character. When that end was accomplished, all the bitterness was turned into sweetness. God made the travail of his soul to be forgotten by reason of the joy that came of it. Job no longer thought of the dunghill and the potsherd, and the lost sheep, and the consumed camels—he only thought of the goodness of God who had restored everything to him, again, and given him back the dew of his youth and the freshness of his spirit.

Child of God, are you vexed and embittered in soul? Then bravely accept the trial as coming from your Father and say, "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Press on through the cloud which now lowers directly in your pathway—it may be with you as it was with the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, "they feared as they entered the cloud," yet in that cloud they saw their Master's Glory and they found it good to be there. Fear not, have confidence in God—all your sorrows shall yet end in joy and the thing which you deplore, today, shall be the subject of tomorrow's sweetest songs. The Egyptians whom you

have seen today, you shall see no more forever. Therefore, be of good courage and let your hearts be strengthened.

I am going to take the text right away from its connection. Having explained it as it relates to Job and those like Job, I want to use it for the benefit of anyone else who can fitly use the expression, "The Almighty has vexed my soul." My sermon will be like an archer's arrow—God knows where the heart is at which I am aiming. I draw the bow at a venture—the Lord will direct the bolt between the joints of the harness of the one it is intended to strike.

I. First, I shall speak upon A PERSONAL FACT. Many a person has to say, "The Almighty has embittered my soul."

This happened to you, dear Friend, perhaps, *through a series of very remarkable troubles.* Few persons were happier than Job and few have found misfortunes tread so fast upon one another's heels. What were the troubles in your case? It may be that one child was taken away and then another—and yet a third. Or, perhaps, your infant was carried to the grave, to be soon followed by its dear mother, and you are left to mourn alone. Bereavement has followed bereavement with you until your very soul is embittered. Or it may be that there is one ill at home and you fear that precious life cannot be preserved—your cup seems full of trembling. Or, possibly, you have had a series of disasters in business such as you could not have foreseen or prevented. It seems, to you, indeed, as if no man was ever so unsuccessful—you have not prospered in anything. Wherever you have put your hand, it has been like the hoof of the Tartar's horse which turns the meadow into a desert—nothing goes well with you. Perhaps you have desired to be a man of learning. You have worked very hard and now your health is failing you, so that you cannot go through the examination for which you have been preparing. You would willingly die at your post if you had a hope of gaining the honor to which you aspire, but this is denied you. On the very doorstep of success, you are stopped. God seems to have embittered your life.

Or you of the tender heart have been disappointed and rejected, and your love has been thrown away. Or you of the energetic spirit have been foiled and driven back so many times that you perceive that your attempts are fruitless. Or you, a man of true integrity, have been cruelly slandered and you feel as if you could not bear up under the false charge that is in the air all around you. Ah, I know what *that* means! There are many like you, with whom the Almighty is dealing in all wisdom and goodness, as I shall have to show you.

It may be, however, that you have not had a succession of troubles, but you have had *one trial constantly gnawing at your heart.* It is only one, but that one you are half-ashamed to mention, for it seems so trifling when you try to tell it to another. But to you it is as when a wasp stings and continues to sting—it irritates and worries you. You try patience, but you have not much of that virtue. You seek to escape from the trouble, but it is always boring into your very heart. It is only some one little thing—not the devil, only a messenger of Satan, one of his errand

boys, one of the small fry of trouble. You cannot make out how you can be so foolish as to let it worry you, but it does. If you rise up early, or if you sit up late, it is still there tormenting you. You cannot get rid of it and you cry, "The Almighty has embittered my soul." Time was when you would have laughed at such things and put them aside with a wave of your hand—but now they follow you into business, they are with you at the desk, they come home with you, they go to bed with you—and they worry you even in your dreams.

Perhaps I have not yet hit the mark with you, my Friend. It is neither a succession of troubles nor yet any one trouble. In fact, you have no trouble at all in the sense of which I have been speaking. Your business prospers, you are in fine health, your children are about you, everyone holds you in good esteem—yet your very soul is embittered. I hope that it has become saddened *through a sense of sin.* At one time you did not think that there was any fault to be found with you, but you have had a peep in the mirror of the Word, the Spirit of God holding the candle. You have had a glimpse of yourself, your inner life and your condition before God and, therefore, your soul is vexed. Ah, many of us have gone through that experience and, wretched as it is, we congratulate you upon it! We are glad that it is so with you!

Is it more than a sense of sin? Is it *a sense of wrath* as well? Does it strike you that God is angry with you and has turned His hand against you? Does this seem to loosen the very joints of your bones? Ah, this is a dreadful state of heart, indeed—to feel God's hand day and night upon you till your moisture is turned into the drought of summer! Yet, again I congratulate you on it, for the pilgrim path to Heaven is by Weeping Cross—the road to joy and peace is by the way of a sense of sin and a sense of the Lord's anger!

It may be that this is not exactly your case, but you are *restless and weary.* Somehow you cannot be easy, you cannot be at peace. Someone recommended you go to a play, but it seemed such a dull piece of stupidity you came away worse than you went! Your doctor says that you must have a change of air. "Oh," you cry, "I have had 50 changes of air and I do not improve a bit!" You are even weary of that in which you once delighted. Your ordinary pursuits, which once satisfied you, now seem to be altogether stale, flat and unprofitable. The books that charmed your leisure have grown wearisome. The friends whose conversation once entranced you, now seem to talk but idle chit-chat and frivolity.

Besides all that, there is *an undefined dread upon you.* You cannot tell exactly what it is like, but you almost fear to fall asleep lest you should dream and dreaming should begin to feel the wrath to come. When you wake in the morning, you are sorry to find that you are where you are and you address yourself sadly to the day's business, saying, "Well, I will go on with it, but I have no joy in it at all. The Almighty has embittered my soul." This happens to hundreds and they do not know what it means, they cannot understand it—but I hope that I may be privileged to so explain it that some may have to say that never did a better thing hap-

pen to them than when they fell into this state—that never, in all their lives, did they take so blessed a turning as when they came down this dark lane and began to murmur, "The Almighty has embittered my soul."

II. From this personal fact of which I have spoken, I want to draw AN INSTRUCTIVE ARGUEMENT which has two edges.

The first is this. If the Almighty—note that word, "Almighty"—has vexed your soul as much as He has, *how much more is He able to vex it?* If He has embittered your life up to the present point and He is, indeed, almighty, what more of bitterness may He not yet give you? You may go from being very low in spirit to being yet more heavy even unto despair. You may even come to be like Bunyan's man in the iron cage, or like the demoniac wandering among the tombs! Remember what God has done in the case of some men and if He can do that on earth, what can He not do in Hell? If this world, which is the place of mercy, yet contains in it men so wretched that they would rather die than live, what must be the misery of those who linger in a state of eternal death—and yet from whom death forever flies? O my God, when my soul was broken as between the two great millstones of Your justice and Your wrath, how my spirit was alarmed! But if You could do this to me *here*, what could You not have done to me hereafter if I had passed out of this world into the next with unforgiven sin? I want everyone who is in sore soul-trouble to think over this solemn Truth of God and consider what God can yet do with him.

Now turn the argument the other way. If it is the Almighty who has troubled us, *surely He can also comfort us.* He that is strong to sink, is also strong to save. If He is almighty to embitter, He must also be almighty to sweeten. Draw, then, this comfortable conclusion—"I am not in such a state of misery that God cannot lift me right out of it into supreme joy." It is congenial to God's Nature to make His creatures happy. He delights not in their sorrow, but if, when He does make them sorrowful, He can make life unendurable—if His anger can fill a man with terror so that he fears his own steps and starts at his own shadow—if God can do that on the one hand, what can He not do on the other? He can turn our mourning into music! He can take off from us the ashes and the sackcloth and clothe us in beauty and delight! God can lift up your head, poor Mourner, sorrowing under sin and a fear of wrath. I tell you, God can at once forgive your sin, turn away all His wrath and give you a sense of perfect pardon—and with it a sense of his undying love! Oh, yes, that word, "Almighty," cuts both ways! It makes us tremble and so it kills our pride. But it also makes us hope and so it slays our despair. I put in that little piece of argument just by the way.

III. Now I come to my third point which is more directly in my road. And that is this. Here is A HEALTHFUL ENQUIRY for everyone whose soul has been vexed by God.

The enquiry is, first, *is not God just in vexing my soul?* Listen. Some of you have long vexed Him—you have grieved His Holy Spirit for years! Why, my dear Man, God called *you* when you were but a boy! Or very gently He drew you while you were yet a young man. You almost yielded

to the importunity of a dying friend who is now in Heaven. Those were all gentle strokes, but you heeded them not—you would not return unto the Lord. And now, if He should see fit to lay His hand very heavily upon you and vex you in His hot displeasure, have you not first vexed Him? Have you not ill-used Him? If you would not come to Him in the light, it is very gracious of Him if He permits you to come in the dark. I do not wonder if He whips you to Himself, seeing that you would not come when, like a father beckoning a little child, He smiled at you and wooed you to Him.

I might say to others, if God brings you to Himself by a rough road, you must not wonder, for have not you many a time vexed your godly wife? When seeing friends who come to join the Church, I am often struck with the way in which converts have to confess that, in former days, they made it very hard for their families. There are some men who cannot speak without swearing—at the very name of Christ they begin to curse and to swear! They seem as if they hated their children for being good—and could not be too hard upon their wives because they try to be righteous in the sight of God. Well, if you vex God's people, you must not be surprised if He vexes you! He will give you a hard time of it, it may be, but if it ends in your salvation, I shall not need to pity you, however hard it may be for you! There is one thing more you may say to yourself, and that is, "It is much better to get to Heaven by a rough road than to go singing down to Hell. O my God, tear me in pieces, but save me! Let my conscience drive me to the very borders of despair if You will but give me the blood of Christ to quiet it. Only make sure work of my eternal salvation and I will not mind what I have to suffer!" I shall bless God for you, dear Friend, and you will bless God for yourself, too, if you are but brought to Him, even though you have to say, "The Almighty has vexed my soul."

Another point of enquiry is this—*What can be God's design in vexing your soul?* Surely He has a kind design in it all. God is never anything but good. Rest assured that He takes no delight in your miseries—it is no pleasure to Him that you should sit, and sigh, and groan and cry. I mean that such an experience, in itself, affords Him no pleasure, but He has a design in it. What can that design be? May it not be, first, to make you think of Him? You forgot Him when the bread was plentiful upon the table, so He is going to try what a hungry belly will do for you when you would gladly fill it with the husks that the swine eat. You forgot Him when everything went merry as a marriage peal—it may be that you will remember Him, now that your children are dying, or your father is taken away! These trials are sent to remind you that there is a God. There are some men who go on by the space of 40 years, together, and whether there is a God or not, is a question which they do not care to answer. At least they live as if there were no God—they are practically atheists. This stroke has come that you may say, "Yes, there is a God, for I feel the rod that He holds in His hand. He is crushing me, He is grinding me to powder. I must think of Him."

It may be, too, that He is sending this trial to let you know that He thinks of you. "Ah," you say, "I did not suppose that He thought of *me*. I thought that surely He had forgotten such an one as I am." But He does think of you. He has been thinking of you for many a day and calling and inviting you to Him—but you would neither listen nor obey—and now that He has come, He means to make you see that He loves you too well to let you be lost! You are having His blows right and left, to let you know that He thinks of you and will not let you perish. When God does not care for a man, He flings the reins onto His neck and says, "There! Let him go!" Now see how the horses tear away—you need not lash them—they will go as though they had wings and could fly! Leave a man to himself and his lusts drag him, post haste, to Hell. He pants to destroy himself! But when God loves a man, He pulls him up as you might pull your horse on to his haunches. He shall not do as he wills—the eternal God, in infinite mercy, will not let him! He tugs at the reins and makes the man feel that there is a mightier than he who will not let him ruin himself,

But who will restrain him from rushing to his destruction? Am I speaking to any who are in this plight? Let them not kick against God, but rather be grateful that He condescends thus to meddle with their sinful souls and check them in their mad career! I have spoken lately with some who were about to join this Church, who, if friends had said, five or six months ago, that they would have been sitting on that chair talking to me about their souls, would have cursed them to their faces! Yet they were obliged to come. The Lord had hold of them—they tried to break away, but He had them too firmly! They were caught by my Lord and Master as a good fisherman will catch a salmon, if once it takes his bait—he lets it run for a while and then pulls it up a bit, and then lets it go again. But he brings it to land at last—and I have had the pleasure of seeing many sinners thus safely caught by Christ! It may be, dear Friend, that the Almighty is vexing you to let you see that He loves you!

May it not be also for another reason—that He may wean you entirely from the world? He is making you loathe it. "Oh," you used to say, "I am a young man and I must see life!" Well, you have seen it, have you not? And do you not think that it is wonderfully like death and corruption? That which is called, "London life," is a foul, loathsome, crawling thing, fit only for the dunghill! Well, you have seen it, and you have had enough of it, have you not? Perhaps your very bones can tell what you gained by that kind of life. "Oh," you said, "but I must try the intoxicating cup!" Well, what did you think of it the morning after you tried it? "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contention? Who has babbling? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine—they that go to seek mixed wine." I saw a man of that kind in the street, the other day. Once he was a most respectable man who could consort with others and be esteemed by them. Now he is dreadfully down at the heel. I think I saw a toe through each of his shoes and he looked like the wretched being that he is. He shuffled from place

to place as if he did not wish to be seen—and he did not lift himself up until he got into the gin palace to take another draught of Hell-water—and then he seemed, for a minute, to be drawn straight again by that which made him crooked!

You know the man—is he here tonight? Dear Sir, have you not had sufficient strong drink? God has let you have enough of it that you may hate it from this hour and flee away from it, never to desire to go back to it again! I heard, at Boulogne, the story of a Frenchman who had been drinking heavily, and who threw himself into the harbor. Some sailors plunged in and rescued him. The man was on the deck of a ship, but in a minute he broke away from his keepers and jumped in again. It was not pleasant to be trying to save a madman, again and again, yet they did get him out and took him down below. But he rushed on deck and jumped in a third time. A man there said, "You leave him to me." So he jumped overboard and seized hold of him, put his head under the water and held him there. When he managed to get his head up, his rescuer gave him another ducking, and then another, till he just about filled him up with water. He said to himself, "I will sicken him of it, so that he will never jump in here again." He just diluted the *eau-de-vie* the man had taken and then he dragged him on board ship—and there was no fear of his jumping overboard any more! And I believe that, sometimes, the Lord acts like that with men. He did so with me—He made sin to be exceedingly bitter to my soul, till I loathed it—and it has often given me a trembling even to think of those sins that then were pleasurable to me. It is a blessed thing to be plucked out of the water and saved, once and for all, but a little of that sailor's style of sousing the drunkard—a little of those terrors and alarms that some of us felt is not lost! And when the Lord thus deals with sinners, it is with the design that they may never want to go back to those sins again. They have had their full of them and henceforth they will keep clear of them. It may be that the Almighty vexed some of you for this cause, that you might, from then on, hate sin with a perfect hatred.

Do you say, my Friend, that I have not been describing you? You are still a gentleman, an excellent well-to-do man? You have done nothing wrong in the way of vice, but still you cannot rest? No, and God grant that you never may rest till you come humbly to the Savior's feet, confess your sin and look to Him alone for salvation! Then you shall rest with that deep "peace which passes all understanding," which shall, "keep your heart and mind by Christ Jesus" forever and ever.

I think I hear someone say (and with that I will finish), "As the Almighty has vexed my soul; *what had I better do?* I thought, Sir, when I came in here that I was a castaway, but I see that I am the man you are looking after. I thought that I was too wretched to be saved, but now I perceive that it is to the wretched that you are preaching. It is for the mourning, the melancholy and the desponding. What had I better do?" Do? Go home and shut your door, and have an hour alone with yourself and God! You can afford that time—it is Sunday night and you do not

need the time for anything else. That hour alone with God may be the crisis of your whole life—try it!

"And when I am alone with God, what had I better do?" Well, first, tell Him all your grief. Then tell Him all your sin—all you can remember. Hide nothing from Him! Lay it all, naked and bare, before Him. Then ask Him to blot it all out, once and for all, for Jesus Christ's sake. Tell Him that you can never rest till you are at peace with Him. Tell Him that you accept His way of making peace, namely, by the blood of the Cross. Tell Him that you are now willing to trust His dear Son for everything and to accept salvation freely as the gift of Sovereign Grace. If you do so, you will rise from your knees a happy man and, what is more, a renewed man! I will stand bondsman for God about this matter. If there is this honest confession, this hearty prayer and this simple acceptance of Christ as your Savior, the days of your mourning are ended, the daylight of your spirit shall be beginning and I should not wonder if many of your present troubles come to an end! Certainly your heart-ache shall be ended and ended at once. Oh, that you would accept my Savior!

Sometimes, when I am thinking about my Hearers and my work, I seem to take God's part instead of yours, and to say, "O God, I have preached Christ to them. I have told them about Your dear Son and how Your fatherly heart parted with Him that He might die that men might live—yet they do not care for Him! They will not have Your Son. They will not accept the pardon that Jesus bought." If the Lord were to say to me, "Then never go and say another word to them, they have so insulted Me in refusing such a gift," I have at times felt as if I would *say,* "Lord, that is quite right. I do not want to have anything more to do with them as they treat You so shamefully." But we have not reached that point yet, so once more I put it to you—have you not delayed long enough? Have you not questioned long enough? Have you not turned away from the Savior long enough? And now that the arrows of God are sticking in you, will you not ask Him to draw them out? Will you not plead that the precious blood of Christ may be balm to heal your wounds?

Oh, come to Him! In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I beseech you, come! By amazing love and amazing pity, by wondrous Grace that abounds over sin, come and welcome! Jesus said, "He that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Then come to Him and come now! Blessed Spirit, draw them! Draw them now, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOB 27

Remember that Job's friends had accused him of having committed some great sin which would account for his great sorrows. The good man is naturally very indignant and he uses the strongest possible language to cast away from himself with horror the charges which they brought against him in the day of his grief.

Verses 1-4. *Moreover Job continued his parable and said, As God lives, who has taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who has vexed my soul; all the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils, my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit.* He felt that it would be wicked for him to confess to what he had never done—it would be deceit for him to acknowledge crimes which he had never committed. Therefore he most solemnly declares, by the living God, that he never will permit the lie to pass his lips. He had not transgressed against God in the way his friends insinuated and he would not admit that he had.

5. *God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove my integrity from me. We* are bound to keep to the truth. No man is permitted, with mock humility, to make himself out to be what he is not. Job was right, so far in standing up for the integrity of his character, for he was a man of such uprightness that even the devil could not find fault with him. He was such a holy man that God could say to Satan, "Have you considered My servant, Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God and eschews evil?" And all that the devil could do was to insinuate that he had a selfish motive for his goodness. "Have not You made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand, now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face." Job was upright, yet we are never so right but what there is a mixture of wrong with our right! A man may very easily become self-righteous when he is defending his own character. There may be a 1ack of admissions of faults unperceived. There may be a blindness to faults that ought to have been perceived—and something of that imperfection, doubtless, was in the Patriarch.

6. *My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.* There he went too far, for he had not yet seen God as he afterwards saw Him. Before man, there was nothing with which he needed to reproach himself. But how he changed his tone when God drew near to him! Then he said, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." If we knew more of God, we would think less of ourselves. If those who consider themselves perfect, had any idea of what perfection is, their comeliness would be turned in them to corruption!

7, 8. *Let my enemy be as the wicked, and he that rises up against me as the unrighteous. For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained, when God takes away his soul?* That is a very solemn, searching question. If a man tries to play fast and loose with God, if he is a hypocrite, and if he should gain by his hypocrisy all that he tries to gain, namely, repute among men, "what is his hope when God takes away his soul?" Then, his hope is turned to horror, for he has to stand before Him who cannot be deceived, but who reads him through and through, and casts him away because he has dared to insult his Maker by attempting

to deceive Omniscience. Oh, may you and I never play the hypocrite's part! There cannot be a more foolish thing and there cannot be a more wicked thing.

9. *Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him?* That is one of the tests of the hypocrite—"Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him?" Will the hypocrite cry to God at all? Will he not give up even his profession of religion when he loses his prosperity? And if he does cry, will God hear the double-tongued man?

10. *Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?* These questions, while they condemn those who are hypocrites, are comforting to many a sincere heart. Dear Friend, do you delight yourself in God? Do you really admire Him, love Him and seek to glorify Him? Then you are no hypocrite, for no hypocrite ever found delight in religion and especially no hypocrite ever found delight in God Himself!

"Will he always call upon God?" No, there are certain times when he will cease to pray. Pleasure enchants him and he will not pray. Or, perhaps, he is so discouraged and despairing that he cannot pray. There are times when the hypocrite gives up praying, but the Christian cannot give it up—it is his vital breath—he must pray. No sorrow is so deep as to take him off it! No joy is so fascinating as to seduce him from prayer. But as for the hypocrite, "Will he always call upon God?" No, you may rest assured that he will not.

11. *I will teach you by the hand of God.* Or, better, as the margin runs, "I will teach you *being in the hand of God."* Being himself chastened and experiencing the teaching of God, Job says to his friends, "I will teach you."

11-14. *That which is with the Almighty will I not conceal. Behold, all you yourselves have seen it; why then are you thus altogether vain? This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, which they shall receive of the Almighty. If his children are multiplied, it is for the sword: and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread.* If God does not visit the hypocrite with punishment in his own person, it will certainly fall upon the next generation.

15-18. *Those that remain of him shall be buried in death: and his widows shall not weep. Though he heaps up silver as the dust, and prepares raiment as the day; he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver. He builds his house as a moth, and as a booth that the keeper makes.* "He builds his house as a moth," which makes its home in the cloth and the servant's brush knocks it all out and destroys the moth's children, too. "And as a booth that the keeper makes." The hypocrite's house is no better than that little shanty which the keeper of a vineyard puts up with a few boughs or mats, to sit under it from the heat of the sun. God save us from being such poor builders as this! May we build a house that is founded on the Rock!

19. *The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered: he opens his eyes, and he is not.* He has grown rich by oppression, he has become

great in the land by his hypocrisy, but he speedily goes down to the grave. God looks at him and he is gone.

20. *Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest steals him away in the night.* This is a parallel passage to that word of our Lord, "But he that hears, and does not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."

21. *The east wind carries him away, and he departs and as a storm hurls him out of his place.* These are your great ones, your proud ones, your strong men that accomplish nothing and would insure their own lives to a certainty for the next 20 years! Look how they go! Shadows are not more evanescent! A poor moth is not more easily crushed.

22. *For God shall cast upon him, and not spare: he would gladly flee out of His hand.* The man would escape from God if he could. It was Job's glory, as we read just now, that he was in God's hand. But the hypocrite would gladly flee out of God's hand, yet that is altogether impossible.

23. *Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.* Such ignominy shall be poured upon the hypocrite at the last, that all mankind shall endorse the sentence of God which condemns him! And shame and everlasting contempt shall be his portion. The Lord save all of us from such an awful doom, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—605, 592, 555.

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

SONGS IN THE NIGHT
NO. 2558

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"But none says, Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night?" Job 35:10.

ELIHU was a wise man, exceedingly wise, though not as wise as the All-Wise Jehovah, who sees light in the clouds and finds order in confusion. Hence Elihu, being much puzzled at beholding Job so afflicted, cast about him to find the cause of it and he very wisely hit upon one of the most likely reasons, although it did not happen to be the right one in Job's case. He said within himself, "Surely, if men are sorely tried and troubled, it is because while they think about their troubles and distress themselves about their fears, they do not say, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night?'" Elihu's reason is right in the majority of cases. The great cause of a Christian's distress, the reason of the depths of sorrow into which many Believers are plunged is simply this—that while they are looking about, on the right hand and on the left, to see how they may escape their troubles, they forget to look to the hills from where all real help comes—they do not say, "Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night?"

We shall, however, leave that inquiry and dwell upon those sweet words, "God my Maker, who gives songs in the night." The world has its night. It seems necessary that it should have one. The sun shines by day and men go forth to their labors. But they grow weary and nightfall comes on, like a sweet gift from Heaven. The darkness draws the curtains and shuts out the light which might prevent our eyes from slumber. The sweet, calm stillness of the night permits us to rest upon the bed of ease and forget, awhile, our cares, until the morning sun appears and an angel puts his hand upon the curtain, opens it once again, touches our eyelids, and bids us rise and proceed to the labors of the day. Night is one of the greatest blessings men enjoy—we have many reasons to thank God for it. Yet night is to many a gloomy season. There is "the pestilence that walks in darkness." There is "the terror by night." There is the dread of robbers and of fell disease with all those fears that the timorous know when they have no light wherewith they can discern different objects. It is then they fancy that spiritual creatures walk the earth, though, if they knew rightly, they would find it to be true that—

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep,"

and that at all times they are round about us, not more by night than by day.

Night is the season of terror and alarm to most men, yet even night has its songs. Have you ever stood by the seaside at night and heard the pebbles sing, and the waves chant God's praises? Or have you ever risen from your bed and thrown up the window of your chamber and listened? Listened to what? Silence—save now and then a murmuring sound which seems sweet music. And have you not fancied that you have heard the harps of gold playing in Heaven? Did you not conceive that yon stars—those eyes of God looking down on you—were also mouths of song and that every star was singing God's glory, singing as it shone its mighty Maker's well-deserved praise? Night has its songs! We need not much poetry in our spirit to catch the song of night and hear the spheres as they chant praises which are loud to the heart, though they are silent to the ear—the praises of the mighty God who bears up the unpillared arch of Heaven and moves the stars in their courses.

Man, too, like the great world in which he lives, must have his night. For it is true that man is like the world around him—he is himself a little world—he resembles the world in almost everything and if the world has its night, so has man. And many a night do we have—nights of sorrow, nights of persecution, nights of doubt, nights of bewilderment, nights of affliction, nights of anxiety, nights of ignorance, nights of all kinds which press upon our spirits and terrify our souls! But blessed be God, the Christian can say, "My God gives me songs in the night."

It is not necessary, I take it, to prove to you that Christians have nights, for if you are Christians, you will find that *you* have them and you will not need any proof, for nights will come quite often enough. I will, therefore, proceed at once to the subject and notice, with regard to songs in the night, first, *their source*—God gives them. Secondly, *their matter*—what do we sing about in the night? Thirdly, *their excellence*—they are hearty songs and they are sweet ones. And fourthly, *their uses*—their benefits to ourselves and others.

I. First, songs in the night—WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF THEM? "God," says the text. Our "Maker, who gives songs in the night."

Any man can sing in the day. When the cup is full, man draws inspiration from it. When wealth rolls in abundance around him, any man can sing to the praise of a God who gives a plenteous harvest, or sends home a loaded argosy. It is easy enough for an Aeolian harp to whisper music when the winds blow—the difficulty is for music to come when no wind blows. It is easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight, but he is the skillful singer who can sing when there is not a ray of light by which to read. He sings from his heart and not from a book that he can see, because he has no means of reading, save from that inward book of his own living spirit from where notes of gratitude pour forth in songs of praise. No man can make a song in the night, himself. He may attempt it, but he will find how difficult it is. It is not natural to sing in trouble. "Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name," is a daylight song. But it was a Divine song which Habakkuk

sang when, in the night, he said, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom," and so on, "yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." I think on the banks of the Red Sea, any man could have made a song like that of Moses, "The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." The difficulty would have been to compose a song *before* the Red Sea had been divided, and to sing it before Pharaoh's hosts had been drowned, while yet the darkness of doubt and fear was resting on Israel's hosts! Songs in the night come only from God—they are not in the power of man!

But what does the text mean when it asserts that God gives songs in the night? We think we find two answers to the question. The first is that usually in the night of a Christian's experience, *God is his only song.* If it is daylight in my heart, I can sing songs touching my gifts, songs touching my sweet experiences, songs touching my duties, songs touching my labors. But let the night come, my gifts appear to have withered. My evidences, though they are there, are hidden. Now I have nothing left to sing of but my God. It is strange that when God gives His children mercies, they generally set their hearts more on the mercies than on the Giver of them! But when the night comes and He sweeps all the mercies away, then at once they each say, "Now, my God, I have nothing to sing of but You! I must come to You and to You, only. I had cisterns once—they were full of water and I drank from them—but now the created streams are dry. Sweet Lord, I desire no stream but *Yourself,* I drink from no fountain but from You." Yes, child of God, you know what I say, or, if you do not yet understand it, you will do so, by-and-by! It is in the night we sing of God and of God alone. Every string is tuned and every power has its tribute of song while we praise God and nothing else! We can sacrifice to ourselves in daylight—we only sacrifice to God by night. We can sing high praises to ourselves when all is joyful, but we cannot sing praise to any but our God when circumstances are untoward and Providences appear adverse. God alone can furnish us with songs in the night.

And yet again, not only does God give the song in the night because He is the only subject upon which we can sing, then, but because *He is the only One who inspires songs in the night.* Bring me a poor, melancholy, distressed child of God. I seek to tell him precious promises and whisper to him sweet words of comfort. He listens not to me—he is like the deaf adder, he heeds not the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely. Send him round to all the comforting divines and all the holy Barnabases who ever preached and they will do very little with him—they will not be able to squeeze a song out of him, do what they may! He is drinking gall and wormwood! He says, "O Lord, I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping." And comfort him as you may, it will be only a faint note or two of mournful resignation that you will get from him—you will evoke no Psalms of praise, no hallelujahs, no joyful sonnets.

But let God come to His child in the night, let Him whisper in his ear as he lies on his bed, and now you can see his eyes glisten in the night season. Do you not hear him say—

"'Tis Paradise, if You are here!

If You depart, 'tis Hell"?

I could not have cheered him—it is God that has done it—for God "gives songs in the night." It is marvelous, Brothers and Sisters, how one sweet Word of God will make many songs for Christians. One Word of God is like a piece of gold—the Christian is the gold-beater and he can hammer that promise out for whole weeks! I can say, myself, I have lived on one promise for weeks and needed no other. I had just simply to hammer the promise out into gold leaf and plate my whole existence with joy from it! The Christian gets his songs from God. God gives him inspiration and teaches him how to sing! "God my Maker, who gives songs in the night."

So, then, poor Christian, you need not go pumping up your poor heart to make it glad! Go to your Maker and ask Him to give you a song in the night, for you are a poor dry well. You have heard it said that when a pump is dry, you must pour water down it, first of all, and then you will get some up. So, Christian, when you are dry, go to your God! Ask Him to pour some joy down you and then you will get more joy up from your own heart. Do not go to this comforter or that, for you will find them, after all, "Job's comforters." Go first and foremost to your Maker, for He is the great Composer of songs and Teacher of music—He it is who can teach you how to sing!

II. Thus we have dwelt upon the first point. Now let us turn to the second. WHAT IS GENERALLY THE MATTER CONTAINED IN A SONG IN THE NIGHT? What do we sing about?

Why, I think, when we sing by night, there are three things we sing about. Either we sing about the day that is over, or about the night, itself, or else about the morrow that is to come. Those are all sweet themes when God our Maker gives us songs in the night. In the midst of the night, the most usual method is for Christians to sing about *the day that is over.* The man says, "It is night now, but I can remember when it was daylight. Neither moon nor stars appear at present, but I remember when I saw the sun. I have no evidences just now, but there was a time when I could say, 'I know that my Redeemer lives.' I have my doubts and fears at this present moment, but it is not long since I could say with full assurance, 'I know that He shed His blood for me.' It may be darkness, now, but I know the promises *were* sweet. I know I had blessed seasons in His House. I am quite sure of this. I used to enjoy myself in the ways of the Lord and though now my path is strewn with thorns, I know it is the King's Highway. It was a way of pleasantness, once—it will be a way of pleasantness again. 'I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.'"

Christian, perhaps the best song you can sing, to cheer you in the night, is the song of yesterday! Remember, it was not always night with you—in fact, night is a new thing to you. Once you had a glad heart and a buoyant spirit. Once your eyes were full of fire. Once your feet were light. Once you could sing for very joy and ecstasy of heart. Well, then, remember that God who made you sing yesterday has not left you in the night! He is not a daylight God who cannot know His children in darkness, but He loves you now as much as ever! Though He has left you for a little while, it is to prove you, to make you trust Him more and love and

serve Him more. Let me tell you some of the sweet things of which a Christian may make a song when it is night with him.

If we are going to sing of the things of yesterday, let us begin with what God did for us in times past. My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, you will find it a sweet subject for song, at times, to begin to sing of electing love and Covenant mercies. When you, yourself, are low, it is well to sing of the Fountainhead of mercy, of that blessed decree wherein you were ordained unto eternal life—and of that glorious Man who undertook your redemption—of that solemn Covenant signed, sealed and ratified in all things ordered well, of that everlasting love which, before the hoary mountains were begotten, or before the aged hills were children, chose you, loved you firmly, loved you fast, loved you well, loved you eternally! I tell you, Believer, if you can go back to the years of eternity—if you can, in your mind, run back to that period before the everlasting hills were fashioned, or the fountains of the great deep were scooped out—and if you can see your God inscribing your name in His eternal Book. If you can read in His loving heart eternal thoughts of love to you, you will find this a charming means of giving you songs in the night! There are no songs like those which come from electing love, no sonnets like those that are dictated by meditations on discriminating mercy!

Think, Christian, of the Eternal Covenant, and you will get a song in the night! But if you have not a voice tuned to so high a key as that, let me suggest some other mercies you may sing of—they are the mercies you have *experienced*. What? Can you not sing a little of that blessed hour when Jesus met you, when, as a blind slave, you were sporting with death and He saw you and said, "Come, poor slave, come with Me"? Can you not sing of that rapturous moment when He snapped your fetters, dashed your chains to the earth and said, "'I am the Breaker. I am come to break your chains and set you free"? Though you are now ever so gloomy, can you forget that happy morning when, in the House of God, your voice was loud—almost as a seraph's voice, in praise, for you could sing, "I am forgiven! I am forgiven! A monument of Grace, a sinner saved by blood"? Go back, Brothers and Sisters—sing of that moment and then you will have a song in the night! Or, if you have almost forgotten that, then surely you have some precious milestone along the road of life that is not quite overgrown with moss, on which you can read some happy inscription of God's mercy towards you! What? Did you ever have a sickness like that which you are suffering now, and did He not raise you up from it? Were you ever poor, before, and did He not supply your needs? Were you ever in straits before, and did He not deliver you? Come, Brothers and Sisters! I beseech you—go to the river of your experience and pull up a few bulrushes and weave them into an ark wherein your infant faith may float safely on the stream! I bid you not forget what God has done for you.

What? Have you buried your diary? I beseech you, turn over the book of your remembrance. Can you not see some sweet Hill Mizar? Can you not think of some blessed hour when the Lord met with you at Hermon? Have you never been on the Delectable Mountains? Have you never been

fetched from the den of lions? Have you never escaped the jaw of the lion and the claws of the bear? No? O, I know you have! Go back, then, a little way, to the mercies of the past—and though it is dark, now, light up the lamps of yesterday and they shall glitter through the darkness and you shall find that God has given you a song in the night!

"Yes!" says one, "but you know that when we are in the dark, we cannot see the mercies that God has given us. It is all very well for you to talk to us thus, but we cannot get hold of them." I remember an old experimental Christian speaking about the great pillars of our faith. He was a sailor and we were on board ship and there were sundry huge posts on the shore, to which the vessels were usually fastened by throwing a cable over them. After I had told him a great many promises, he said, "I know they are good promises, but I cannot get near enough to shore to throw my cable around them. That is the difficulty." Now it often happens that God's past mercies and loving kindnesses would be good sure posts to hold on to, but we have not faith enough to throw our cable around them, so we go slipping down the stream of unbelief, because we cannot stop ourselves by our former mercies.

I will, however, give you something over which I think you can throw your cable. If God has never been kind to you, one thing you surely know, and that is, He has been kind to others. Come, now, if you are in ever so great straits, surely there have been others in greater straits. What? Are you lower down than poor Jonah was when he went to the bottom of the mountains? Are you worse off than your Master when He had nowhere to lay His head? What? Do you conceive yourself to be the worst of the worst? Look at Job, scraping himself with a potsherd and sitting on a dunghill. Are you as low as he? Yet Job rose up and was richer than before! And out of the depths, Jonah came and preached the Word! And our Savior, Jesus, has mounted to His Throne!

O Christian, only think of what God has done for others! If you cannot remember that He has done anything for you, yet remember, I beseech you, what His usual rule is and do not judge my God harshly! You remember when Benhadad was overcome and fled, his servants said to him, "Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings. Let us, I pray you, put on sackcloth on our loins, ropes upon our heads and go out to the king of Israel: perhaps he will save your life. So they girded sackcloth on their loins, put ropes on their heads and said, Your servant Benhadad says, I pray you, let me live." What said the king? "Is he yet alive? He is my brother!" And truly, poor Soul, if you had never had a merciful God, yet others have had! The King of Kings is merciful! Go and try Him! If you are ever so low in your troubles, look to the hills from where comes your help. Others have had help from there and so may you!

Up might start hundreds of God's children and show us their hands full of comforts and mercies—and they could say, "The Lord gave us these without money and without price. And why should He not give to you, also, seeing that you, too, are the King's son?" Thus, Christian, you may get a song in the night out of other people if you cannot get a song

from yourself. Never be ashamed of taking a leaf out of another man's experience book! If you can find no good leaf in your own, tear one out of someone else's! If you have no cause to be grateful to God in darkness, or cannot find cause in your own experience, go to someone else and, if you can, harp God's praise in the dark and, like the nightingale, sing His praises sweetly when all the world has gone to rest. Sing in the night of the mercies of yesterday!

But I think, Beloved, there is never so dark a night but there is something to sing about, even *concerning that night.* For there is one thing I am sure we can sing about, let the night be ever so dark, and that is, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." If we cannot sing very loudly, yet we can sing a little low tune, something like this, "He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." "Oh," says one, "I do not know where I shall get my dinner tomorrow! I am a poor wretch." So you may be, my dear Friend, but you are not so poor as you deserve to be! Do not be mightily offended about that. If you are, you are no child of God, for the child of God acknowledges that he has no right to the least of God's mercies, but that they come through the channel of Divine Grace alone. As long as I am out of Hell, I have no right to grumble. And if I were in Hell, I should have no right to complain, for I felt, when convinced of sin, that never creature deserved to go there more than I did. We have no cause to murmur—we can lift up our hands and say, "Night! You are dark, but you might have been darker. I am poor, but if I could not have been poorer, I might have been sick. I am poor and sick, yet I have some friends left. My lot cannot be so bad but it might have been worse."

Therefore, Christian, you will always have one thing to sing about, "Lord, I thank You it is not all darkness!" Besides, however dark the night is, there is always a star or moon. There is scarcely a night that we have, but there are just one or two little lamps burning in the sky and, however dark it may be, I think you may find some little comfort, some little joy, some little mercy left—and some little promise to cheer your spirit. The stars are not put out, are they? No, if you cannot see them, they are there, but I think one or two must be shining on you—therefore give God a song in the night! If you have only one star, bless God for that one, and perhaps He will make it two. And if you have only two stars, bless God twice for the two stars, and perhaps He will make them four. Try, then, if you cannot find a song in the night.

But, Beloved, there is another thing of which we can sing yet more sweetly, and that is we can sing of *the day that is to come.* Often I cheer myself with the thought of the coming of the Lord. We preach now, perhaps, with little success. "The kingdoms of this world" have not yet "become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ." We are laboring, but we do not see the fruit of our labor. Well, what then? We shall not always labor in vain, or spend our strength for nothing! A day is coming when every minister of Christ shall speak with unction, when all the servants of God shall preach with power, and when colossal systems of heathenism shall tumble from their pedestals and mighty, gigantic delusions

shall be scattered to the winds! The shout shall be heard, "Alleluia! Alleluia! The Lord God Omnipotent reigns." I look for that day—it is to the bright horizon of Christ's Second Coming that I turn my eyes! My anxious expectation is that the blessed Sun of Righteousness will soon arise with healing in His wings, that the oppressed shall be righted, that despotism shall be cut down, that liberty shall be established, that peace shall be made lasting and that the glorious liberty of the children of God shall be extended throughout the known world! Christian, if it is night with you, think of tomorrow! Cheer up your heart with the thought of the coming of your Lord! Be patient, for you know who has said, "Behold, I come quickly and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

One thought more upon this point. There is another sweet tomorrow of which we hope to sing in the night. Soon, Beloved, you and I shall lie on our dying bed and we shall not lack a song in the night even then! And I do not know where we shall get that song if we do not get it from the tomorrow. Kneeling by the bed of an apparently dying saint recently, I said, "Well, Sister, the Lord has been very precious to you. You can rejoice in His Covenant mercies and His past loving kindnesses." She put out her hand and said, "Ah, Sir, do not talk about *them* now! I need the sinner's Savior as much, now, as ever—it is not a *saint's* Savior I need, it is still a sinner's Savior that I need, for I am still a sinner." I found that I could not comfort her with the past, so I reminded her of the golden streets, of the gates of pearl, of the walls of jasper, of the harps of gold, of the songs of bliss. And then her eyes glistened as she said, "Yes, I shall be there soon. I shall see them, by-and-by," and then she seemed so glad. Ah, Believer, you may always cheer yourself with that thought! Your head may be crowned with thorny troubles now, but it shall wear a starry crown presently! Your hands may be filled with cares, but they shall soon grasp a harp—a harp full of music. Your garments may be soiled with dust, but they shall be white, by-and-by! Wait a little longer.

Ah, Beloved, how despicable our troubles and trials will seem when we look back upon them! Looking at them here in the present, they seem immense. But when we get to Heaven they will seem to us just nothing at all! We shall talk to one another about them in Heaven and find all the more to converse about, according as we have suffered more here below. Let us go on, therefore, and if the night is ever so dark, remember there is not a night that shall not have a morning! And that morning is to come, by-and-by. When sinners are lost in darkness, we shall lift up our eyes in everlasting light. Surely I need not dwell longer on this thought. There is matter enough for songs in the night in the past, the present and the future.

III. And now I want to tell you, very briefly, WHAT ARE THE EXCELLENCIES OF SONGS IN THE NIGHT ABOVE ALL OTHER SONGS.

In the first place, when you hear a man singing a song in the night—I mean in the night of trouble—you may be quite sure it is a *hearty one.* Many of you sing very heartily now. I wonder whether you would sing as loudly if there were a stake or two in Smithfield for all of you who dared

to do it? If you sang under pain and penalty, that would show your heart to be in your song. We can all sing very nicely, indeed, when everybody else sings—it is the easiest thing in the world to open our mouth and let the words come out. But when the devil puts his hand over our mouth, can we then sing? Can you say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him"? That is hearty singing! That is real song that springs up in the night!

Again, the song we sing in the night will be *lasting.* Many songs we hear our fellow creatures singing will not do to sing, by-and-by. They can now sing rollicking drinking songs, but they will not sing them when they come to die. No, but the Christian who can sing in the night will not have to leave off his song—he may keep on singing it forever! He may put his foot in Jordan's stream and continue his melody. He may wade through it and keep on singing until he is landed safe in Heaven! And when he is there, there need not be a pause in his strain, but in a nobler, sweeter song he may still continue singing the Savior's power to save!

Again, the songs we warble in the night are those that show we have *real faith in God.* Many men have just enough faith to trust God as far as Providence goes as they think right. But true faith can sing when its possessors cannot see! It can take hold of God when they cannot discern Him!

Songs in the night, too, prove that we have *true courage.* Many sing by day who are silent by night. They are afraid of thieves and robbers. But the Christian who sings in the night proves himself to be a courageous character. It is the bold Christian who can sing God's sonnets in the darkness.

He who can sing songs in the night proves, also, that he has *true love to Christ.* It is not love to Christ merely to praise Him while everybody else praises Him—to walk arm in arm with Him when He has the crown on His head is no great thing to do. To walk with Christ in rags, is something more. To believe in Christ when He is shrouded in darkness. To stick hard and fast by the Savior when all men speak ill of Him and forsake Him—that proves true faith and love. He who sings a song to Christ in the night, sings the best song in all the world, for he sings from the heart.

IV. I will not dwell further on the excellencies of night songs, but just, in the last place, SHOW YOU THEIR USE.

Well, Beloved, it is very useful to sing in the night of our troubles, first, *because it will cheer ourselves.* When some of you were boys, living in the country, and had some distance to go alone at night, do you not remember how you whistled and sang to keep your courage up? Well, what we do in the natural world, we ought to do in the spiritual! There is nothing like singing to keep up our spirits. When we have been in trouble, we have often thought ourselves to be well near overwhelmed with difficulty, so we have said, "Let us have a song." We have begun to sing and we have proved the truth of what Martin Luther says, "The devil cannot stand singing, he does not like music." It was so in King Saul's day—an evil spirit rested on him, but when David played his harp, the

evil spirit left him. This is usually the case, and if we can begin to sing, we shall remove our fears.

I like to hear servants sometimes humming a tune at their work. I love to hear a plowman in the country singing as he goes along with his horses. Why not? You say he has no time to praise God, but if he can sing a song, surely he can sing a Psalm—it will take no more time! Singing is the best thing to purge ourselves of evil thoughts. Keep your mouth full of songs and you will often keep your heart full of praises—keep on singing as long as you can—you will find it a good method of driving away your fears.

Sing in trouble, again, *because God loves to hear His people sing in the night.* At no time does God love His children's singing so well as when He has hidden His face from them and they are all in darkness. "Ah," says God, "that is true faith that can make them sing praises when I do not appear to them! I know there is faith in them that makes them lift up their hearts, even when I seem to withhold from them all My tender mercies and all My compassions." Sing then, Christian, for singing pleases God! In Heaven we read that the angels are employed in singing—be you employed in the same way—for by no better means can you gratify the Almighty One of Israel who stoops from His high Throne to observe us poor, feeble creatures of a day!

Sing, again, for another reason—*because it will cheer your companions.* If any of them are in the valley and in the darkness with you, it will be a great help to comfort them. John Bunyan tells us as Christian was going through the valley, he found it a dreadful place—horrible demons and hobgoblins were all about him—and poor Christian thought he must perish for certain. But just when his doubts were the strongest, he heard a sweet voice. He listened to it and he heard a man in front of him singing, "Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil." Now, that man did not know who was near him, but he was unwittingly cheering a pilgrim behind him! Christian, when you are in trouble, sing! You do not know who is near you. Sing—perhaps you will get a good companion by it. Sing! Perhaps there will be another heart cheered by your song. There is some broken spirit, it may be, that will be bound up by your sonnets. Sing! There is some poor distressed Brother, perhaps, shut up in the Castle of Despair, who, like King Richard, will hear your song inside the walls and sing to you—and you may be the means of getting him ransomed and released! Sing, Christian, wherever you go! Try, if you can, to wash your face every morning in a bath of praise. When you go down from your chamber, never look on man till you have first looked on your God—and when you have looked on Him, seek to come down with a face beaming with joy! Carry a smile, for you will cheer up many a poor, wayward pilgrim by it. And when you fast, Christian. When you have an aching heart, do not appear to men to fast—appear cheerful and happy! Anoint your head and wash your face—be happy for your Brothers and Sisters' sake—it will tend to cheer them up and help them through the valley.

One more reason, and I know it will be a good one for you. Try and sing in the night, Christian, fo*r that is one of the best arguments in all the world in favor of your religion.* Our divines, nowadays, spend a great deal of time in trying to prove the truth of Christianity to those who disbelieve it. I would like to have seen Paul trying that plan! Elymas the sorcerer withstood him—how did Paul treat him? He said, "O full of all subtlety and all mischief, you child of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" That is about all the politeness such men ought to have when they deny God's Truth! We start with this assumption—that the Bible is God's Word—but we are not going to prove God's Word. If you do not believe it, we will bid you, "Good-bye." We will not argue with you. Religion is not a thing merely for your intellect to prove the greatness of your own talent—it is a thing that demands your *faith*. As a messenger of Heaven, I demand that faith! If you do not choose to give it, on your own head be your doom!

O Christian, instead of disputing, let me tell you how to prove your religion! Live it out! Live it out! Give the external as well as the internal evidence! Give the external evidence of your own life. You are sick. There is your neighbor who laughs at religion. Let him come into your house. When he was sick, he said, "Oh, send for the doctor!" And there he was fretting, fuming and making all manner of noises. When you are sick, send for him, first—tell him that you are resigned to the Lord's will, that you will kiss the chastening rod, that you will take the cup and drink it, because your Father gives it. You need not make a boast of this, or it will lose all its power. But do it because you cannot help doing it. Your neighbor will say, "There is something in such a religion as that."

And when you come to the borders of the grave—your neighbor was there, once, and you heard how he shrieked and how frightened he was—give him your hand and say to him, "Ah, I have a Christ who is with me now. I have a religion that will make me sing in the night." Let him hear how you can sing, "Victory, victory, victory," through Him that loved you. I tell you, we may preach fifty thousand sermons to prove the Gospel, but we shall not prove it half as well as you will through singing in the night! Keep a cheerful face, keep a happy heart, keep a contented spirit, keep your eyes bright and your heart aloft—and you will prove Christianity better than all the Butlers, and all the wise men who ever lived! Give them the "analogy" of a holy life and then you will prove religion to them! Give them the "evidences" of internal piety, developed externally, and you will give the best possible proof of Christianity! Try and sing songs in the night, for they are so rare that if you can sing them, you will honor your God and bless your friends!

I have been all this while addressing the children of God. And now there is a sad turn that this subject must take. Just a word or so, and then I have done. There is a night coming in which there will be no songs of joy—a night when a song shall be sung of which misery shall be the subject, set to the music of wailing and gnashing of teeth. There is a night coming when woe, unutterable woe, shall be the theme of an awful, terrific *miserere.* There is a night coming for the poor soul—and unless

he repents it will be a night wherein he will have to sigh, and cry, and moan, and groan forever! I hope I shall never preach a sermon without speaking to the ungodly, for oh, how I love them! Swearer, your mouth is black with oaths, now, and if you die, you must go on blaspheming throughout eternity—and be punished for it throughout eternity! But listen to me, blasphemer! Do you repent? Do you feel yourself to have sinned against God? Do you feel a desire to be saved? Listen! You may be saved! You may be saved! There is another. She has sinned enormously against God and she blushes even now while I mention her case. Do you repent of your sins? Then there is pardon for you! Remember Him who said, "Go, and sin no more."

Drunkard! But a little while ago you were reeling down the street and now you repent. Drunkard, there is hope for you! "Well," you say, "what shall I do to be saved?" Let me again tell you the old way of salvation. It is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." We can get no further than that, do what we will! This is the sum and substance of the Gospel. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." So says the Savior Himself. Do you ask, "What is it to believe?" Am I to tell you again? I cannot tell you except that it is to look to Christ. Do you see the Savior there? He is hanging on the Cross. There are His dear hands, pierced with nails, fastened to a tree as if they were waiting for your tardy footsteps because you would not come. Do you see His dear head there? It is hanging on His breast as if He would lean over and kiss your poor soul. Do you see His blood, gushing from His head, His hands, His feet, His side? It is running after you because He well knew that you would never run after Him.

Sinner, to be saved, all you have to do is to look at that Man! Can you not do it now? "No," you say, "I do not believe that will save me." Ah, my poor Friend, try it, I beseech you, try it! And if you do not succeed when you have tried it, I will be bondsman for my Lord—here, take me, bind me and I will suffer your doom for you! This I will venture to say—if you cast yourself on Christ and He deserts you—I will be willing to go halves with you in all your misery and woe, for He will never do it. Never, *never,* NEVER—

"No sinner was ever empty sent back,
Who came seeking mercy for Jesus' sake."

I beseech you, therefore, try Him and you shall not try Him in vain! You shall find Him "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." And you shall, by His Grace, be saved now—and saved forever!

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NO. 2559

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 6, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 25, 1883.

"Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it: unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He gives His Beloved sleep."
Psalm 127:1, 2.

Did you notice, when we were reading this Psalm, that it is entitled, "A Song of Degrees for Solomon"? The title may be either, "*for* Solomon," or, "*by* Solomon." If it is *by* Solomon, I can only say that it is worthy to be placed side by side with the Book of Proverbs or Ecclesiastes. It is a Psalm which is very brief and which has the soul of wisdom in it. It is, in fact, a Solomonic Psalm—it is quite after his style of writing. The whole of it might be made into a Proverb and its separate sentences might be cut up into proverbial expressions. It was inspired by the Spirit of God and He may have used for the writing of it no less accomplished an individual than King Solomon, whose wisdom was greater than that of the men of his age. If it is a Psalm, "*for* Solomon"—which it strikes me it is, then it is none the less admirable in our esteem, for, if Solomon needed to be taught it, certainly we do. If, when David knew that Solomon was to build the house of the Lord, he thought it necessary, before he began the Temple, to remind him that "unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it," we may depend upon it that as we are less wise than Solomon, we need to have just such a lesson taught us! Let us accept it as from David and let each one of us hear the words of the dying king as he speaks to us as well as to his son and successor.

I intend, as God shall help me, to fetch out three or four lessons from our text which it may be well for us to learn.

I. The first is WHAT WE MAY NOT EXPECT, namely, that God will build the house without our laboring, that God will guard the city without the watchman's staying awake, or that He will give us bread without our toiling for it. This principle may be applied to a great many matters.

And, first, to *what we call our ordinary life,* though I never like to draw any distinction between one portion of our life and another. It is a part of the Christian religion to sanctify *everything* so that we worship God in the shop as well as in the meeting house—and we are as reverent about our domestic affairs as about our devotional concerns. But, still, as it is our habit to speak of the ordinary affairs of life, it is necessary to say that

in all things to which we put our hand, we are expected to use all available means. We are not allowed to be idle, to sit still and do nothing because we say that we are trusting in Providence. One of the things which Christianity cannot bear is laziness! The Apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, was inspired to pass a very sharp sentence upon them—"This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat"—a sentence which would exterminate a great number of persons who at the present time seem to flourish! If in business I am not diligent, I cannot expect to prosper. If I wish to be a man of learning, I cannot get it simply by praying for it—I must study, even to the weariness of the flesh. If a man is sick, he may trust in God as much as he wills—that should be his first thing—but let him also use such remedies as God has given if he can discover them, or learn of them from others.

My grandfather said to me, many years ago, concerning the preparation of a sermon, and I have always remembered his words, "I study my sermon as much as if the work of preaching depended entirely upon myself. And I go into the pulpit relying upon the Spirit of God, knowing that it does not depend upon myself, but upon Him." For us to do all that we can do is the appointed way in which the blessing comes. We would all think it ridiculous if men left off sowing because they had so much faith in God that they were sure He would not suffer men to starve and would be certain to send a harvest. Suppose the farmer said, "Plowing is for ordinary people. I live by faith, I never plow. Harrowing, fertilizing, sowing—these are all the pitiful shifts of unbelief. I shall do nothing with the land, I shall just wait. I cannot doubt that God can make wheat to grow quite as well as weeds and, if He pleases, He can give me a harvest without my using any of these ordinary means which are only a coverlet for unbelief."

Within a year, he would be convinced of his folly! I wish it were as easy to convince all Christians of their folly in thinking that faith means that they are to work no more. "Faith without works is dead." "Faith works by love." There is no stronger and more forceful principle for fetching out the energy of a man than his conviction that God is with him. If God works in me to will and to do of His good pleasure, then the natural result is that I must work *out* what He has worked *in*. Where God has united means and ends, I would say of them, "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder." To trust in the means without God is presumption—but to profess to trust in God without the means is only another form of presumption—it will come to the same thing in the end. I am to believe in God and in God, alone, but if I perceive that He works in a certain way, I am to drop into God's way and to believe that He will work while I am pleading with Him to do so, and seeking to carry out His plan of doing it!

So, in the ordinary affairs of life, my dear Brothers and Sisters, do not go and put your feet on the fender and sit still, and say, "The Lord will provide," because if you act so foolishly, very likely He will provide you with a place in the workhouse! If you go up and down the town with no profession, with your hands in your empty pockets and say that you are

trusting in God, God will give you the wages that you earn, namely poverty! He will clothe you with rags if you clothe yourself with idleness. If you will not serve Him, you shall find the reward that comes to the man who wastes his Master's talents by wrapping them in a napkin!

The same thing is true in *the great* m*atter of our salvation.* Dear Friends, it is quite true that God saves His people. "Salvation is of the Lord" from first to last, but no man is saved apart from his own believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. That faith is God's gift, but it is man's *act.* The Holy Spirit does not believe for us—what would He believe? No man is saved apart from repentance—and repentance is a work of the Spirit of God. But the Spirit of God does not repent—what has He to repent of? It is the man, himself, who must repent and believe. "If you believe not, you shall die in your sins." "Unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish." Do not, therefore, any of you, sit still and dream about the Predestination of God! Divine Predestination is most blessedly true—it is the joy of my spirit—but do not turn it into a pillow for your idle head and fancy that blessings will come to you when you are not looking for them. "Faith comes by hearing." Therefore hear most attentively and reverently the Word of God—and drink it in. And "salvation comes by faith." Therefore, what you hear of God's Word, believe and accept simply and with a childlike faith—and so you shall be saved. Do not, I pray you—any of you—fall into the idea that it matters not where you are, or what you do, or how inattentive you are, or how careless you are about the things of God. It does matter! All these things are *sins*—sins for which you shall be called to account!

Oh, that the Spirit of God may lead you to adopt quite another line of conduct! Search the Scriptures, says our Lord, "for in them you think you have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." May you often be found upon your knees, for the Lord hears them that cry unto Him! May you be found confessing your sins, for, "whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy"! May you be found believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, for there is no soul lost that casts itself at the foot of Christ's Cross! Do not, then, misread the text as though, either in common things or in the loftiest matter, we were to do nothing and leave everything to God.

This also is true, dear Friends, as to the matter of *our spiritual growth.* We are not to assume that because we are Christians, we shall go on growing in Grace if we use no sort of means whatever. I know persons who stint themselves in their meals—and they are often faint—do you wonder? What shall I say of persons who, on the Sabbath, practice once-a-day Christianity and who never go out to a week-night service? They have not time, they say, yet I hear of their being at various secular entertainments. They stint themselves in their spiritual food and then they say—

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

That is a point *I* long to know, too, for the case is very doubtful! If a man will not feed himself upon the Bread of Heaven, can he expect that he shall grow strong? We see some who neglect private prayer—of course not giving it up altogether—but they have little of it and they are seldom found where the assemblies of God's people are gathered for prayer. And they say they do not know how it is that they do not enjoy religion! I should think not, dear Friend—you do not have enough of it, for it is with religion as the poem says it is concerning learning—

"A little learning is a dangerous thing.
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring."

It is often so with religion—a man gets just enough of it to make him miserable! He can no longer be satisfied with the world and he is not satisfied with God—so he is miserable all round. Oh, that you had not only religion enough to make you a miserable sinner, but enough to make you a rejoicing saint! But if we neglect to search the Word and neglect private prayer, and neglect the assemblies of God's House. If we restrain communion with the Most High, can we wonder if we do not grow? God will undoubtedly build our spiritual house, but we, also, must labor in it—there must be an earnestness, a prayerfulness, a watchfulness, an intensity of desire, a using of all appointed means by which we may be built up in our most holy faith.

I am certain that this is also true in a fourth matter, namely, *in our Christian work,* in our trying to bring souls to Christ. We cannot expect to see men converted if we are not earnest in telling them that Truth of God which will save the soul. It is the work of the Spirit to convert sinners—to regenerate must always be the sole work of God—yet the Lord uses us as His instruments. The great honor that God often puts upon instrumentality is very wonderful. Paul speaks of himself as the very mother of those to whom he was the means of conversion—"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ is formed in you." Then, in writing to Philemon, he says, of Onesimus, "whom I have begotten in my bonds"—making himself to be, as it were, both father and mother—strong expressions and yet they are warranted, otherwise Paul would not have used them. God uses those who seek to win souls so that, as it were, He puts the very paternity of those souls upon them! It is great condescension that He should do so, but let it teach us this lesson that if God works by means, as He does, He will not have us neglect those means, or we will be found unfit for the Master's use!

A Brother complains that there are no conversions under his ministry. Will he ask himself whether he has aimed at conversion? A Sunday school teacher says that she has seen no girls in her class brought to Christ. Has her teaching been such as to tend that way? Has Christ been set forth in His sweet attraction? Has prayer been offered that the girls might come to Christ? Have they been pleaded with? Have they been taught their lost condition? Have they been shown the excellence of Christ as a Savior? You see, if we live in a region of means suited to ends, it is the path of wisdom to find out the means best suited to the desired end—and to use it in dependence upon God! Our text tells us

that without God our labor will be in vain. But it does not tell us that we may expect to have our desire in our spiritual service unless we, ourselves, work for the Lord. I believe, my Brothers, that if we preach Christ Crucified with crucified hearts—if we set forth Christ with earnest longing that men may see Him, they will see Him. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

I believe, teachers in the Sunday school, that if Christ is taught in the classes earnestly and prayerfully, the children will receive Him. Ask those who have tried it—there are many such here—and I am sure that if I were to appeal to their experience, they would tell you that though they may have been, at times, slack in their service, God has never been slack concerning His promise! His Word has not returned unto Him void—it has accomplished what He pleased and prospered in the thing where He sent it. Let there be no listless indifference, no falling back upon the Sovereignty of God as an excuse for half-heartedness! Solomon was too wise a man to write a Psalm that would be meant to encourage idleness! The Holy Spirit would never have led him to write sentences that would bring us into such a state of heart as that.

II. But now, secondly, our text suggests to us WHAT WE MAY EXPECT. That is, we may expect failure if we attempt the work without God.

We may expect it and we shall not be disappointed. Going back, again, to *our ordinary life,* note what the Psalmist says. "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it: unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows." The pivotal word in the text is the word, "vain." Three times it rings out as a death-knell to the hope of every man who tries to do without God! Vain is your building a house; vain is your watching a city; vain is your rising up early and sitting up late. "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher. All is vanity—utter vanity without God! Success in life, without God, is always vain! A man may be a millionaire without God, but what is that? He may be reported in the newspapers to have died worth a million, when, in fact, he was not worth a brass button! He was put into a coffin, lowered into the grave, but he was worth nothing at all. He could take nothing with him. Even the silver plate on the coffin did not belong to him. If anyone had dug open the grave and taken the plate away, he could not have said, "Leave that alone, it is mine!" "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out." So life is a failure if it is only used in amassing gold.

"Oh," says one, "but a man may be famous without God." Yes, in a sense, he may. But have you ever analyzed fame? Of what good is it to a dead man? Of what good is it to a *damned* man*?* A man in Hell and his name in every newspaper! A man in the bottomless Pit and they say that he is one of the great men of the age who has left his mark upon the world! But if it is a mark without God*,* what kind of mark is it? A mark that had better be obliterated as soon as possible! No creature can be a success unless it pleases its Creator. No man can be a success unless he has treasure laid up for immortality, a mansion in Heaven, a place to

abide in the islands of the blessed in the land of the hereafter. Without God, he is a complete failure in life.

It may be that some of you are trying to attain success without God, but you will not succeed and, in the process, you will fritter away your life. What would you think of a man who cut himself up into strips with which to make himself a coat? "That would be a most absurd thing," you say. Well, but what think you of a man who destroys himself that he may get himself bread, or that he may find a house and clothes for himself? "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?" That is, supposing he could gain the whole world by bartering his soul for it, what profit would he make? But men do not gain the world by losing their soul—they lose both this world and the next, too! And for what do they lose all this? Why, they "rise up early." Oh, what would they not give for another half-hour in the morning? They rise up early and they "sit up late," till they fall asleep at their work. Oh, dear! What mill horses! What worse than slaves! And they, "eat the bread of sorrows." There is very little bread and, instead of being buttered, it seems to be smeared over with gall. There are some that I know who would not eat bread if they could help it—they grudge the money that it costs to keep body and soul together. And so they are losing this life and they are not getting anything for the life to come. They are throwing all away for some vain hope of becoming rich, that they may be talked of among men! Oh, happy and blessed is the man who has risen above that groveling and who knows that without his God he cannot prosper! He first of all goes to Him to learn what true prosperity is—and then looks to Him to bestow it.

Now, dear Friends, here is a very important and blessed Truth of God which concerns *our salvation.* What we may expect regarding our salvation is this—if we attempt to obtain salvation apart from God, it will be a failure. Oh, how many there are who are seeking salvation through the works of the Law! They build and they watch. And they rise up early and they sit up late. And they eat the bread of sorrows and, let me tell you, if you are trying to be saved by your good works, you have need to get up early, sit up late, work your fingers to the bone, worry yourselves into your graves and then it will still be all in vain! Let me read to you, again, the beginning of that 126th Psalm, though we had it just now. The man of works rises up early, sits up late and eats the bread of sorrows all in vain.

But this is what Faith says—"When the Lord turned, again, the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord has done great things for them." You are trying to see what you can do. But we have found out what the Lord can do! You are fretting and fuming because of what you cannot do. But we are laughing and singing because of what the Lord has done by the redemption accomplished on the Cross of Calvary! I wish you would flee from Moses and get away to Christ and begin to trust and rejoice in Him, for, if you do not, this is what you may expect—if you spend the next half-century in

tears and mortification of the body, if you deny yourself and give all your goods to feed the poor, and even give your body to be burned, yet vanity of vanities shall it all be! Without God, all that you can do in the matter of your salvation shall be vain!

It is just the same with regard to the Christian's *growth in Divine Grace.* The Believer must never think that he will naturally and necessarily grow in Grace because he uses the means of Grace. I just now insisted upon the reading of the Scriptures, but that may be a very dry formality unless we look to Got to bless it to us. I spoke of gathering to hear the Word, but that will be a very unprofitable piece of ceremonialism unless our eyes are toward the Lord rather than toward the preacher. I spoke of private prayer, but that may degenerate into a mere form unless we have communion with God in it. Indeed, it is *nothing* unless God is there! You cannot go an inch in the pilgrimage to Heaven without God! It is not possible for you to overcome a solitary sin, or to produce a single virtue apart from the Holy Spirit. "They labor in vain who build" without God. You may rise up early and sit up late—and be one of the most outspoken professors of religion—but nothing will come of it unless God is in it all.

And so is it with regard to *the work and service of God.* O Bothers and Sisters, we may preach, but none of our preaching will raise the spiritually dead unless the Lord is there! We may adopt every kind of expedient and go what length we like in seeking a revival, but it will be a farce and a nullity unless our dependence is upon the Lord alone. Give us a working Church, but let it first be a trusting Church! Let the man be earnest, but first let him be humble. Let him believe in the Gospel being blessed, but let him first believe that it is God, alone, who can bless the Gospel. If not, we shall certainly meet with failure. If we dream for a moment that we can change a heart of stone into flesh, that stony heart will, by its obduracy, teach us a severe lesson! If we even think that one little child can be converted by our tears and prayers, apart from God, we shall be utterly disappointed. Without God, we are nothing!

III. Now, thirdly, and briefly, let us notice, from the text, WHAT WE SHOULD NOT DO.

And the first point is that *in our ordinary affairs we should not fret, or worry, or grieve.* You know how some people act—they forget that God rules all things and that they are taught to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." So they are all in a fume, up in the morning far too early, waking everybody up who needed a little extra rest, then toiling hard all day, not really doing much, but fussing over it all, rather than really accomplishing anything. They seem as if they cannot go to bed at night—there is always something more to be done. There is another drawer that needs putting to rights, or something else that must be attended to even at midnight! Then look at the man in business—he does not do half as much as the quiet man who goes calmly about his work. But you would think, from the fuss he makes, that he is going to compete with all the traders in London and that his shop, if he is to live by it, must cut out all the shops that ever existed! If there is a bad debt, oh, he will be ruined!

I know of some people who seem to make all the affairs of life into a kind of slavery by the way in which they are agitated about them. It is sad to see an immortal soul worrying itself thus about the things of time. Well did the poet say that it resembled—

"Ocean into tempest tossed
To waft a feather or to drown a fly."

Yet this is the way with very many—they forget that God "gives His beloved sleep." They would be far better in bed, sometimes, when they are sitting up and worrying. If they could just sleep on it and leave the matter with God, it would go on a deal better without them than it does with them. Yet they fancy that if they are not there to hack, drive and scold from morning to night, everything would go amiss. My dear worrying man or woman, pray the Lord to give you a little patience and a great deal of faith—and the Grace to be quiet and leave all in His hands.

In the matter of *the* s*oul's salvation,* a man should be anxious, yet his salvation will never come by his working and running from this one to that and the other. I have known men who have desired to be saved and who have not been satisfied with the preacher they have been accustomed to hear—so they have gone to another. They have not been satisfied with him—so they have gone to still another! They have not been content, perhaps, in one denomination, so they have drifted off to another and, at last, it is highly probable that they have cast anchor with the worst lot of all. Perhaps they have got as far as the Papacy and they think now they have something real—here is an historic church—they can cast anchor there. Yet very soon they are off somewhere else. Possibly they go to the Plymouth Brethren, or to the Irvingites—nobody knows where they may go, but they keep flying about here and there. This is not the way that salvation comes! I can stop just where I am and find that by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, I am saved. "Lord Jesus, I believe. I trust You and I am saved." That is the way salvation comes—not by all that running about and gadding to and fro! This is our Lord's declaration—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." That is how, in the Great Commission, He bade us put it and I shall not put it otherwise than He commanded us. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." But instead of doing that, some must be here and there, and everywhere. Oh, that they would listen to the text! "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows," for to those who are in Christ, to those who simply believe on Him, "He gives His beloved sleep."

Now, with regard to *growing in Divine Grace,* I believe that it is much the same. I do not know that I ever looked down my own throat, but there are some Christians who seem to live that way—they will not believe that they are spiritually breathing unless they can see down their own throats! They do not believe that their heart is beating unless they can hear it palpitating. I mean this! There is often such an amount of introspection about Christians that they miss the very essence of true Christian life. They look into *themselves* instead of looking to *Christ alone*. You remember that when the face of Moses shone because he had

looked at God, we read that, "Moses wished that the skin of his face had not shone." You go and look in the mirror and you are in hopes that you will see your face shine that way, but it will not. You say, "Would you not have a man look in the mirror?" Of course I would, that he may see the spots on his face. But he cannot remove them by his looking—he must go to the water to wash the spots away. The way to become like Christ is to think about Christ. Some people think so much about their own sanctification that they miss sanctification altogether. They are looking at their own image and admiring it until they are gradually being more and more conformed to their own image! But he who looks away from himself, entirely to Christ, shall go from glory to glory and be transformed into the image of his Master. It is foolish to be always fretting and worrying, and saying, "I am not humble enough, I am not believing enough, I am not this or that." Go to Christ and rest yourself on Him—and believe that what He has begun to do for you and in you, He will certainly perform and perfect!

Here comes in, again, *our working for the Lord.* Beloved Friends, let us work for the Lord without being "cumbered" with much service as Martha was. The Lord Jesus Christ is admirable in His life for the quiet way in which He does everything. He always seems ready. Whatever the occasion is, He is never put about or flurried. He works all day long and He gets weary, but He says nothing about it. It is a sweet way of working for Christ—"to do the next thing," the next that needs to be done today—not always forecasting all that we are going to do tomorrow and the next day, but calmly and quietly believing that there are so many days in which a man shall be able to walk and to work, and while we have them we will both walk and work in the strength of God! It is a very sweet thing when a man is brought into such a condition that he can work for Christ in Christ's own quiet way, calmly leaving all his cares at his Savior's feet.

IV. I will finish up with the description of SOMETHING WHICH I WOULD LIKE TO SEE. When Solomon was building the Temple for the Lord, it was done very quietly. The men had the plan—not one of them had to consider about it—the plan was all before them and when the stones came from the quarries, they did not need any hammering or any altering. They only needed quietly fixing, each stone into the place that was prepared for it. Those who went to work for Solomon on the mountains had one month in Lebanon, and then they had two months at home, so that they were not killed by overwork. I can well believe that while the Temple was building, it was about the noblest form of human labor that ever fell to men's lot. I should think they began the morning with Psalms—not too early, before the sun was up—but just when they could begin it properly. And they worked well on till evening—not too late, for this was work for God, and God is no tyrant—He does not want His servants to be slaves—and before the sun went down there was an evening hymn and they said, when they went home, "Oh, we have had another blessed day's work! It has been so pleasant! Another big stone has been hoisted up—we could not have believed that it would move, but we got it into its place all right. We had not to hammer it, or even to tap

it with a mallet—it just fitted precisely and we felt so glad, for it is the Lord's House that is being built. We kept singing all day. All the time the great cranes were lifting the big statues, we kept praising and blessing the Lord as we saw the Temple being built. We never had such work, before, and never enjoyed work like it—it seems like one long blessed holiday."

Those who were privileged to work from day to day with all their might yet found every day to be like a Sabbath, for now their ordinary work was work for God. They were not like common workmen who were toiling for the world! Even that by which they earned their daily bread was all for the Lord. So every day went merrily on till they came to the very last day and they saw the top stone raised. And then they looked with the utmost delight upon it and they were the most glad of all the company! When Solomon prayed that wonderful prayer to the great Lord of the House, they felt that they had not labored in vain, for God had blessed them and now He had filled the House with His Presence so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the brightness of the Glory!

Now, I want all of us to feel that as workers for God—pastor and people, Sunday school teachers and you who teach the Bible classes, you who distribute tracts, you who preach at the street corners, all of you, my beloved fellow helpers—we are doing grand work! You know that it is God's House that we are building. Under God and with His help, we are building up His Church with stones that He points out to us, helps us to quarry and enables us to bring into their places. And the work goes on so easily, too, if we will but do it according to the Great Architect's plan. And if we do not get too fussy and busy, and if we do not think that we should knock a corner off here, and alter the shape of a stone there, but will just do it as God would have it done, in His fear, in simple dependence upon Him, confident that it is all right—the great Master-Builder will complete His work! I think that we ought to be the happiest workers who ever lived! It should be a joy to us to do *anything* for the Lord Jesus. And, oh, when it gets finished, and the top stone is laid, and the Lord descends and fills the House and none of us will be any longer needed, for the priests will not be able to stand and minister by reason of the Glory of the Christ who has filled His Church—oh, then what joy we shall have that ever we were engaged in the work!

I mean that for you, my dear Sister—do not go on fretting and saying, "I shall have to give up my class. Things do not seem to go well." I know how you talk—do not speak like that any longer! And you, dear Brother, must not go home to your church in the country and say, "I cannot stir the people. The work does not flourish as I wish it would." Of course it does not! My work does not prosper as I wish it might. You and I can never go at the pace we would like to go, but can we not be willing to be driven by our Lord and to go at HIS pace? It is quite right to work as if the salvation of all the souls in the world depended upon you, yet, as it does not, you had better throw that burden back upon your Lord and Master! Feel the weight of men's souls till it crushes you down to Christ's feet, but do not let it crush you any lower than that—you are not the

Savior, you are not to have the Glory of their salvation. Neither, if you have served your Lord faithfully, shall you have the shame of their ruin if they are lost! Rise not up early and sit not up late. I mean, so as to work yourself away—but give yourself up by faith to do all you can do, all that God shall help you to do—and then trust in Him to bless you and He will bless you. God make this discourse a word of comfort to His own people, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 126. AND 127.

Psalm 126:1. *When the LORD turned, again, the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.* We could hardly believe it! We began to talk incoherently, as men do in their sleep. We were so carried away with joyful rapture that we did not know where we were—"we were like them that dream."

2. *Then was our mouth filled with laughter.* We became Issacs, for he was the child of laughter. We laughed as Abraham did, for very joy of faith! Sometimes laughter may become the holiest possible expression. It may be one of the meanest utterances of our nature, but it may also be one of the loftiest. These people not only laughed, but their mouth was filled with laughter! They could not laugh loudly enough. There was no expression of articulate speech that sufficed them at all—"Then was our mouth filled with laughter."

2. *And our tongue with singing.* When they did find their tongue, they could not speak, they must sing! They could not have anything so slow as a mere declaration, they must have a Psalm—"Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing."

2. *Then said they among the heathen, The LORD has done great things for them.* The heathen could not help seeing that it was the Lord who had delivered Israel. No other people except the Jews ever came back from captivity. The Babylonian tyrant never restored any others to their land, but he did restore these people. And the very heathen said, "It is their God, Jehovah, that has done it." And what did God's own people say?

3. *The LORD has done great things for us; whereof we are glad.* See the difference between the outsider and the insider. The outsider says, "The Lord has done great things for *them.*" Ah, but they who belong to God say, "The Lord has done great things for *us.*" Oh, the privilege of being able to say, *"for us"!* Dear Hearers, can you join with all the saints and say, "The Lord has done great things *for us"*? This is what happened to God's people, before, but now they have fallen into another trouble, so hear how they pray.

4. *Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south.* "You did it once. Do it again. You made us to live. Make us to live again. We sang, then, O Lord—enable us to sing again, 'Turn again our captivity.' As the dry river-beds are suddenly made to be filled with water at the melting of the snow, so come, and fill our hearts, 'as the streams in the south.'"

5. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.* Take that for certain! Lay it down as a Scripture Proverb. When God sends us a wet time, and we have to sow in the moist, foggy atmosphere—never mind—there are brighter days yet to come. We shall reap amid the sunbeams and carry home our sheaves with joy!

6. *He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.* "He shall doubtless come again with rejoicing." Now, you disconsolate workers, you who have only a handful of seed, you shall come back with an armful of sheaves! You shall come back rejoicing though you now go forth sorrowing, for the Lord has said it! Therefore be of good courage.

Psalm 127:1-3. *Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it: unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows for so He gives His beloved sleep. Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD and the fruit of the womb is a reward.* The Psalmist had been speaking about house building and there is the building up of the house in the sense of a family being built up by children. Some people think children an encumbrance, but they are, "a heritage of the Lord," and they are to be looked upon with gladness. One said, "I have 12 sons," and his friend answered, "That is exactly Jacob's number." "Yes," said the first speaker, "and I have Jacob's God to enable me to sustain them." There is a comfort in that thought—may God grant that none may be troubled by those whom God sends to us for a heritage!

4. *As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.* In the case of an arrow, you know it all depends which way you shoot it. Mind, therefore, that you direct your children aright. Give them a good start, a true aim from the very first, God helping you, and then they shall fly from you like the arrows of a mighty archer!

5. *Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them.* That is, when they are like arrows—not when they are gnarled and knotty, like crooked sticks! When they are unwilling to be tutored and trained, then they become a trial and a trouble. But happy is the man who has a quiver full of arrows—the more the merrier of such children as the Psalmist here speaks of.

5. *They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.* When there was any suit at law, these sons of his would be there to plead for him. If there was any fighting to be done, they also would be to the front. It was a dangerous thing to attack a man who had a house full of strong, loyal, loving sons! They would be his defense—they would speak—and speak with very considerable emphasis, too, with his enemies in the gate.

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.

UNIVERSAL FATHERHOOD—A LIE!
NO. 2560

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 13, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 1, 1883.

"I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father."
John 8:38.

THESE were the words of Christ to those who beset Him round about with angry eyes and cruel tongues. Our Lord declared that He had been with His Father before He spoke with those wicked Jews. And, indeed, He had been, for He was with the Father before the worlds were formed. He saw all that the Father did and He helped in doing it—"Without Him was not anything made that was made." He was the Father's eternal delight. The relationship of father and son among man implies that one exists before the other, but it is not so implied in the relationship of the eternal Father and Son. We know not how to explain this great mystery, for the terms Father and Son are only the nearest approximation that can be given to our poor understandings of the relationship which exists between them. Yet is the Father eternal and the Son eternal—the Son coequal and coeternal with the Father. Our Lord had an existence before He was born of Mary—He had an everlasting existence. His goings forth were from of old, even from eternity. Though He is unto us the Child born and the Son given, yet He is equally, "the Everlasting Father," who was and is and ever shall be One with the eternal God.

We learn, from what Christ said, that He knows all the Father's mind. He understands the very essence of the Godhead. He is acquainted with the purposes that are kept secret from men and angels. As God, He knows what none of us can know till the day shall declare it and there is nothing in the Father's heart that is hidden from Him. As the Son of Man, He knew not all things, for He grew up as a child and *increased* in knowledge. And He said, "Of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." But as Divine, He is acquainted with all the Father's heart, mind, will, desire, purpose and plan. The very heart of God is read by His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who dwells in it and is One with Him.

We ought to be very grateful that the Son of God has come into the world and told us all that we need to know concerning the Father. "I speak," He says, "that which I have seen with My Father." First He saw it

all with such an eye as no one else has—and then He came here and spoke of it all, or as much of it as it was possible and wise for man to receive. Let us rejoice in the preaching of Christ, because He testified what He had seen. What He said was no theory, no guess-work—He revealed facts and that which He has told us concerning God is stamped with the solemn seal of Infallible Truth, for Christ cannot err or make mistakes. He has told us what He has seen and testified what He has known. Oh, for Divine Grace to receive His witness! He that does receive it shall live forever—He that rejects it shall die the death that never dies!

Then, at the back of this follows another very consolatory thought—that if Christ's teaching is, indeed, the revelation of what He has seen with the Father, then we are quite certain, since God is never inconsistent with Himself, that there is nothing in the secret purpose and design of God which is contrary to the Gospel which Christ has revealed. When I read, therefore, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely," I need not fear lest any doctrine of election or predestination will be in conflict with that invitation! If I hear Christ say, "He that believes on Me has everlasting life," I may be quite sure that it is so. There is nothing in the sealed Book of the Divine Decrees that is contrary to the open Book of Divine Revelation. There is no passage in the mysterious roll of destiny that, rightly understood, can conflict in any degree with any part of the Volume which the Spirit of God has given us. This ought to make us very glad. I may sit down and pore over the tremendous mysteries of fixed fate, foreknowledge, predestination and the like until I confuse my mind and make my spirit heavy with a thousand gloomy thoughts about things I cannot understand—but what a mercy it is to say, "He has said, 'He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.' "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'" It cannot be that God is keeping back in His mind something that is contrary to what He has spoken—"God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken and shall He not make it good?" I rejoice to know that neither has Christ seen wrongly, nor is there anything which He has seen which would conflict with what He has said to us!

I want you, dear Friends, to look at the text and to notice two or three things that come out, as it were, incidentally. The first is that *the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God is a lie.* That is clear enough from this passage, "I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and you do that which you have seen with *your* father." Then, there are two fathers, and there are two sets of children—there is a Father whom Christ calls, "My Father." And there is another father whom He calls, in speaking to the Jews who hated Him, "your father." The prayer beginning, "Our Father, which are in Heaven," was never meant to be used by everybody. In the mouth of the ungodly, it is altogether out of place, for God is *not* their Father. "You must be born again" before you can be the children of God. The Scripture statement is clear and distinct—"As many as received Him,

to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." We are constantly spoken of as being begotten again, regenerated and adopted by God—all of which is a farce and a nullity if men are by creation and by their first natural birth, the children of God. It is not so! "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the Wicked One." "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God"—and the distinction is set forth between "us" who have received this "manner of love" and the multitude who are still the seed of the Wicked One. This truth needs to be proclaimed very forcibly and the axe must be laid to the root of that deadly upas tree of universal fatherhood, for all manner of mischief will result if unconverted men are led to believe that they are already the sons of God. They are not so until they have been Divinely translated out of the kingdom of Satan into the Kingdom of God's dear Son.

Another fact that is incidentally taught us here is that *there is a devil.* A great many of the devil's servants are so disrespectful to their lord that they even deny his existence and Satan, himself, is so self-denying in this respect that he denies his own existence and sets other people to do the same. Men squeezed the Lord's prayer very hard when they made it read, "Deliver us from evil," for it is pretty clear that it ought to be, "Deliver us from the Evil One." There is a distinct enunciation of a great master-power of evil, a dread personality, "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others," until Grace brought us out from that terrible state! They who have started on the road to Heaven know that there is a devil, for they have had many an evil thought that came not from themselves or from their fellow men—strange, dark, mysterious thoughts which have rushed upon them from the infernal regions and nowhere else!

And those who have stood foot to foot with Apollyon, as Christian did, know full well that he is neither a myth nor a dream, but an awful and powerful adversary from whom may God deliver us from day to day! Even His errand boys, his imps, are terrible enough, for Paul was hard put to it when he was vexed by a messenger of Satan who buffeted him. But as for Satan, himself, when he comes to fight with a soul, woe to that man unless he has the almighty power of God to enable him to bear up in the day of battle! Our Lord Jesus Christ here speaks of Satan as being just as real as the Father is—"I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father." Then He says, in the 44th verse, "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do." I quite expect, one of these days, to meet a man who will tell me that I have neither eyes, nor ears, nor head, nor body, nor soul, nor anything else! Sometimes I have said to myself, "Surely, the course of doubting can go no further! Men have reached the uttermost absurdity of unbelief." But, Brothers and Sisters, we know, to our joy,

that there is a Father in Heaven—the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and, sometimes, we also know to our terror that there is another father of another family, against whom we fight in full assurance of victory, rejoicing that "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly."

Still, those are not the main Truths of God I want to bring out of the text. Let them be laid by to be thought upon, but think, now, of this Truth—that nature is the root of character. That is the doctrine taught in this *text—that conduct is the result of nature,* for Christ says, "I speak that which I have seen with My Father." And to His enemies He says, "You do that which you have seen with your father." A child talks according to his nature. Has he good training at home? Does he live with godly parents? Hear him prattle and you will soon find out where he came from. Listen to another child who has lived in very different circumstances—one who has been brought up amid evil of every kind. As you hear *him* talk, you learn from what kind of family he came. It is the real nature of a person which produces the conversation and the conduct. It is not good actions that make a good man—it is the good man who does the good actions. It is not the sweet apples that make the tree sweet, but it is the sweetness of the sap, the excellence of the tree, which produces the good apples. So, you see, there is a great deal more to be done than to alter your talk and your actions! Our very *nature* has to be changed! That is the Truth of God I want to bring out before I close my discourse.

I. Note, first, that OUR BLESSED LORD PROVED HIS OWN PARENTAGE BY WHAT HE SAID. "I speak that which I have seen with My Father."

Though I cannot put my thoughts into words as I would like, it seems so beautiful to me that our Lord Jesus Christ should be called the Holy Child Jesus and that all His life-teaching should be, as it were, a child telling what He has seen at home. You have sometimes heard a pretty little guileless child telling out all that it has seen while with its father and mother—disclosing even the innermost secrets of the family with naiveté and sweetness. And you have, perhaps, laughed heartily as you have seen how everything has been laid bare by that little talker's tongue. Now transfer that idea, on a sublime scale, to Christ. He comes, as the Holy Child Jesus, not to tell us of the grandeur of God, but as though He condescends to take upon Himself our child-nature in its immaturity. He tells us, as a child, what He has seen with the Father! It is such a blessed way of letting us know the secrets of God's heart for the Only-Begotten, the Well-Beloved, to come and tell us, who are made by Grace the younger members of the family, all that He has seen with the Father.

When we listen to Christ, we say at once that *He speaks to us words of love.* "Never man spoke like this Man." He was Tenderness, itself. He spoke so winsomely and His words were so full of affection that, "the common people heard Him gladly." Yes, and even the publicans and sinners drew near to Him to hear Him! The first words of hope they ever heard fell from His dear lips. The teachers of the Law were chilly and

cold, and they froze up every thought of joy in the poor sinner's soul, but the words of Christ were warm with brotherly affection, for He spoke of what He had seen with the Father! What had He seen with the Father but love—love unutterable, love illimitable, love that endures forever, for "God is Love"!

Yet did Christ also speak *words of justice.* God is not so much Love that any true attribute which ought to be found in a perfect Character is absent and, therefore, God is Just. True Christianity is never dubious about the justice of God. The Lord abhors sin, He cannot endure it. He "will by no means clear the guilty." The tone of the chapter I have read to you [see Exposition at end of sermon] seems severe and so it should be when spoken to hypocrites like those scribes and Pharisees. Do you expect God to treat them with anything but severity? When our Lord Jesus Christ declares that the wicked shall be cast into Hell, "where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." When He says, "these shall go away into everlasting punishment," you see the sternness of Divine Justice! Turn back to the Old Testament and see whether this is not the Jehovah who was the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob—the righteous God who burned up Sodom and Gomorrah and destroyed Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea. I confess that I have been as ready to tremble at the words of Jesus as at the tempest, fire and smoke of Sinai's burning hill, for Love, when it speaks terrible things, makes them more awful because of love! Nothing causes the darkness of the tempest to stand out so terribly as that one bright flash of lightning that makes it afterwards seem darker than before. And when, in the gentle words of Christ, we see the gleam of God's wondrous love, we feel confounded before the terror of many of His warnings because He speaks that which He has seen with His Father—He keeps back nothing. He proclaims the God of Love, but He proclaims that God who shall come and shall not keep silent and who shall judge the nations in righteousness—and smite the wicked with a rod of iron!

Yet notice always about our blessed Master this trait in the character of His speech, that He always speaks *words of Truth.* To Christ's sermons there need never be appended any list of *errata.* He has neither left anything out, nor left anything in by mistake. Nearly 19 centuries have tried and tested the teachings of Jesus and perhaps this century, with all its unbelief, does the Character of Christ more honor than any century that has gone before it! And certainly the influence of Christ is felt, today, in places of which people little dream. I heard one say that when our soldiers, in the fight in Egypt, stopped to put water to the lips of the thirsty enemies whom a century ago our troops would have slain at once, it was because the Christ was shadowing them! They felt His influence, though possibly most of them were not Christians at all. Everywhere the Christ is putting down barbarism in some form or other and helping to amend the character of men—they are girded by Him though they have not known Him! He has never had to alter or to revise His teaching, though our explanation of the teaching has had to be corrected. There have been

prophets and teachers, not sent of God, who, to establish a system of doctrine, or a sect or denomination, have had to keep back or to exaggerate something or other, but it was not so with Christ—He spoke the Truth of God, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth of God, for He had been with the Father, and as a child He told out what He had seen in the Father's House.

Thus I might keep on bringing out various points about our Lord's teaching, but I will only mention one other. And that is, *the supreme holiness of the words of Christ.* Jesus Christ, with all His gentleness and love, never tolerates sin. That narrative in this chapter, in which He said to the adulteress, "Neither do I condemn you," has never made any other woman commit adultery and it has never helped a single conscience to find delight in unhallowed lust. No, the brightness of that glorious tenderness is as the shining of a crystal! It is so pure in its tenderness that while it is gentle with the sinner—and may we always be so—yet it is all the more severe with the sin from its very gentleness! Christ never helps us to be selfish, or to excuse ourselves, or to be hypocritical, covering up our sin with a cloak of godliness. No, but His teaching is pure, transparent righteousness from beginning to end. And we feel as if we could bow down before Him and worship Him with the same adoration with which the cherubim and seraphim salute the Father and say to Christ, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God and Savior, our very hearts do worship You!" The teaching of Jesus is thus holy because He speaks the things which He has seen with His Father.

II. Now I go to my second head which is that, like their Lord, CHRIST'S PEOPLE SHOULD ALSO DISPLAY THEIR PARENTAGE. They should speak what they have seen with their father and brothers and sisters. You and I are not the children of God if it is not so with us. We begin to suspect the parentage of any who have no resemblance to their reputed parents—no family trait or feature whatever! And certainly in spiritual things, he who is in no respect like Christ, may begin to suspect that he is not a true-born child of God, but merely bears the name, and has not come by supernatural descent from the Most High.

Notice, first, that *children of God have, in a measure, the Nature of their Father.* We are not full-grown yet, some of us are very tiny babes, and it is not always easy to detect the Father's likeness in His infants. That likeness comes out as the child grows and as the man appears. We are struck, sometimes, with the similarity between father and son, though we could scarcely trace it while the boy was but little. It is so with us in relation to our Heavenly Father. In regeneration, the Nature of God is imparted to us—not, of course, that high and incommunicable Essence of the Godhead which belongs to God, alone—but the Character and disposition of God become ours. Did not the Apostle Peter write, "Simon Peter, a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as His Divine power

has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and Godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might *be partakers of the Divine Nature,* having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust"?

The Spirit of God, in regeneration, creates in man a third principle which, I believe, was not there before. He is only body and soul until this miracle is worked, but then he becomes body, soul and spirit—he rises into a higher sphere and enters into another world into which he could not have come before. "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul" and we are made in his likeness. "The last Adam was made a quickening Spirit"—and when we, by being born again, receive His likeness, we then participate in that quickening and rise into the Nature and Image of God! There is a "living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever" and which becomes our life in that day when, by the power of the Spirit of the eternal God, we are "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." This is a deep mystery and blessed are they who need not merely talk of it, because every day they know its power! Now, where there is the Nature of God, there will be a likeness to God, and you and I must have a measure of likeness to our great Father, or else it cannot be right for us to say that we are born of Him.

Next, the children of God, when they are in a right state of heart, live with their Father. If you send your children away to school and they never come home to see you, they may grow up with very little of your characteristics, for they are apt to be impressed by those with whom they live. Those who are born of God live with God. Moses said, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." And the Apostle John wrote, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." It is our delight to go to our Father and to speak with Him. We dwell in God, even as Christ said to His disciples, "Abide in Me, and I in you." You cannot live with a man without growing more or less like he is and, certainly, no child of God can live with God and contemplate the Person and Character of Christ so as to abide in Him without becoming changed into His image, "from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Children have a natural gift of imitation, so God*'s children imitate their Father.* Paul's words, in Ephesians 5:1, should read, "Be you imitators of God, as dear children." It is very curious to see how children will imitate their parents. Was there ever a preacher whose boy did not stand on a chair and try to preach? Was there ever a man who laid bricks, or used a saw, who has not caught his children doing the same sort of thing? Was there ever a girl who did not seem to know what she would come to in being a nurse of little children and, therefore, naturally took to nursing a doll? It is the habit of children to imitate—they cannot help it. Well now, if we are the children of God and if we dwell with God, the instinct of imi-

tation will certainly manifest itself and we shall try to be doing, in our small way, those deeds of kindness and love, those acts of righteousness and holiness which God is doing! And it will be said of us in our measure, "You do that which you have seen with your father."

Then, in addition, God*'s children tell what they hear.* There is, in a child, the instinct is always to tell what it hears. I am afraid that I have not lost that instinct, myself, though I am no longer a child. I never like to be entrusted with anybody's secrets and I generally give people notice that if they want them published abroad, they have only to communicate them to me. It stops me from being bothered with a lot of things that will be sure to get known without my telling them! Children cannot keep a secret! It is no use to tell them to do so. If there is any family secret at all, the children must not only be put to bed at night, but they must be kept in bed all day, for, "little pitchers have large ears," and they also have a great gift of running over! Children tell just the very thing that you do not want them to say—and say it just at the very time when you would rather they not have it said! So, the children of God must tell what they have seen of their Father. As soon as ever they have heard of the great Father's love, something makes them want to run outside and find somebody to whom they can say, "Did you ever hear this wonderful story?" Perhaps that "somebody" has no sympathy with them, but he is bound to hear what they have to say—and then off they go to someone else to ask whether he ever heard this good news. Though they may be ridiculed and laughed at, yet these dear children of God will keep telling the blessed tale. The more a man has learned of Christ, the more, I believe, he will want to tell the endless and unreliable story of what he has seen with the Father!

I have known some professedly Christian people who hardly like to be spoken to about the things of God, but it ought not to be so. Let the dear children talk about their Lord as much as ever they like—at the street corners, if they please, or at the dinner table. Anywhere and everywhere, a good word for God ought never to be out of season. Surely, there is no place where a word about the precious Savior will be out of order! What if we do, sometimes, cast pearls before swine? We have so many of them that we can afford to let the wretched creatures munch one or two—and if they turn and tear us, we can endure even this in the hope that, afterwards, they may be sorry for it and God may tear and renew their hearts! Therefore, do not be bashful, you who know the Lord, but say with emphasis, "I must speak that which I have seen with my Father."

III. Now I have to finish on the gloomy side of the subject, namely, that THE DEVIL'S FAMILY PARTAKE OF THE DEVIL'S NATURE and they are sure to speak that which they have seen with their father, too.

For instance, there are some who are very spiteful and speak with *enmity, especially of Christian people.* They cannot stand them—they have never a good word for them. They denounce their motives if they cannot find fault with their actions. I do not wonder that they do, because their father did a long while ago. One of his names is, "the accuser of the

brethren," and it was said to him of old, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed." There is always that enmity and we expect to see it, so we are not surprised. But we are grieved for any of you who, by your speech, betray your hatred of the people of God and so reveal the fact that you are children of Satan. One said, "I would like to kill all Christians. I hate them! I cannot endure them, especially if they are very earnest. I would have such fellows hung." Did not one say, the other day, of a certain minister, that he wished he had been killed in the accident? Yes, he did, and that is the feeling that some have toward those who are true Christians. What said the Jews concerning Paul? "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live." That is the way the devil's children still talk, for they hear it at home with their father. Did Satan ever have a good word for our Father? No. Then he will never have a good word for His children. When, sometimes, he has spoken a true word, he has tried, with fiendish malice, to undermine the cause of Christ by praising it. But you remember how Paul and Silas would not let the devil praise them—they stopped his mouth directly. The highest compliment the devil can pay to virtue, is to hate it. It is the unconscious homage that evil must pay to goodness to loathe it, even as Satan loathes all that is good and right.

Beside this, *the devil's children frequently speak untruths.* There are some who lie in trade and some who lie in jest—they cal1 them, "white lies." If this is the case with anybody here, do not deceive yourself, my Friend. You know who was a liar from the beginning and the father of lies—and they who cannot or will not speak the Truth of God are the children of that ancient liar—and they will have to go home to their father one of these days. They are not the children of God, for God's children abhor a lie! When their word is once given, they will stand to it even to their own hurt. If you are not true, you have not been with the great Father of Truth and you must have learned falsehood from the great father of lies.

There are some, too, who are wic*kedly proud*—proud of their person, proud of the rags they wear, proud of their abilities, proud of their station, proud of their ancestors, proud of I know not what—too haughty, almost, to come near a commonplace person. Yes, they learned that of their father, for Lucifer is the very prince of pride! "By that sin fell the angels." And in that sin live those who are like the fallen angels. I beseech you, fling away all pride! May God help you soon to be rid of it altogether!

Then there is another trait which is common enough in many persons and that is, *self-will.* They are not going to be ruled and governed and tied to their mother's apron strings. They will have their own way. If they suffer for it, they will do as they like and be their own master. Yes, and they learned that from their father, for that is the way he talked of old. "Better," he said, "to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven," according to Milton, and Milton has but put into words the spirit of that fallen one. He

is rebellious, he cannot endure authority, he will not yield to God—the word, "obey," is one which he cannot stand. Oh, let those who are living in disobedience to God, in utter carelessness, as lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, self-seekers who never give a thought to what they owe to their Creator and their Lord—let them understand that all this betrays whose children they are and where they were brought up! Does anybody get angry at my speech and say, "I will hear no more of it"? That is like your father, too! And do you gnash your teeth and bite your tongues? That is like your father, too—"You do that which you have seen with your father."

What shall be the conclusion of my discourse? Why, my drear Friends, that it is of very little use for you to try and change your outward character, your language and so forth, first. What you need is for your *nature* to be changed. When the fountain is made sweet, the streams will be sweet, but, until the source is sweetened, that which comes out of it will still be impure. "You must be born again." Do you ask, "How can that be?" Well, there is a very amazing connection between being born again and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Read the third chapter of John's Gospel and note how our Lord not only said to Nicodemus, "You must be born again," but He also said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Believe in Christ and you are born again! That act of faith is an indication that the new birth has taken place. The moment that God gives you the Grace to trust yourself with Christ, He has also renewed your nature! That act of trusting in Christ is like the first snowdrop that tells us that spring is near. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you are a new person in Christ. Then live with your Father and go out and tell all what you have seen with your Father, and God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C.H. SPURGEON: JOHN 8:12-39

Verses 12, 13. *Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: He that follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees*—These wasps were always stinging Him! When He drove them away once, they quickly returned to attack Him again, "The Pharisees—

13-15. *Therefore said unto Him, You bear record of Yourself; Your record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them; Though I bear record of Myself, yet My record is true: for I know from where I came, and where I go; but you cannot tell from where I come, and where I go. You judge after the flesh; I judge no man.* He did not come for that purpose the first time. He will come, a second time, to judge all mankind.

16. *And yet if I judge, My judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me.* You see, Brothers and Sisters, how our Lord Jesus claimed to be God, for He put Himself here in such a connection with

God as would be quite inconsistent for any mere man. This is what Paul meant when He said that Christ "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," He thought it not a prize to be grasped, for it was already His.

17, 18. *It is also written in your Law that the testimony of two men is true. I am One that bear witness of Myself, and the Father that sent Me bears witness of Me.* He did that by the miracles which Christ worked and they proved that He was, indeed, sent of God.

19. *Then said they unto Him, Where is Your Father? Jesus answered, You neither know Me, nor My Father: if you had known Me, you should have known My Father also.* They thought they knew His reputed father, Joseph. They thought they also knew all about Christ, the carpenter's Son, but there is more in Christ than carnal eyes can ever see. There is more in Christ than the most enlightened understanding, if it is but *natural* understanding, can ever perceive. These blind bats, the Pharisees, neither knew Christ nor the Father. If they had known Him, they would have known the Father, for Christ is "the brightness of His Glory and the express Image of His Person."

20. *These words spoke Jesus in the treasury, as He taught in the Temple: and no man laid hands on Him; for His hour was not yet come.* Like our Lord, every child of God is immortal till his work is done. This ought to divest us of every kind of fear. The enemy cannot lay hands upon a Christian until his Lord wills it—and when his hour has come, then it behooves not the child of God to resist the Father's will.

21. *Then said Jesus again unto them, I go My way and you shall seek Me, and shall die in your sins: where I go, you cannot come.* Oh, what a terrible sentence is that! I pray that the Lord may never say that to any of us, "Where I go, you cannot come." That would be the death-knell of all our hopes and would make our life one long banishment. Blessed be His name! We who have sought Him and have found Him, by His Grace, know that. We shal1 not die in our sins and where He has gone, we shall also go!

22, 23. *Then said the Jews, Will He kill Himself? because He says, Where I go, you cannot come. And He said unto them, You are from beneath; I am from above.* You are of a groveling nature. Your thoughts rise out of the abyss where every evil dwells.

23, 24. *You are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore, of you, that you shall die in your sins: for if you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins.* If you have no faith in Christ as the Son of God, "you shall die in your sins." What an awful thing it will be to die in your sins! What cerements for your eternal burial! What a robe of fire in which to lie down for your long sleep and then to find no sleep because of it! "You shall die in your sins." I would like this short, stern sentence to ring in the ears of every unbeliever. These are not my words, but Christ's own Words—the Words of the most loving and tender Savior—"If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins."

25-29. *Then said they unto Him, Who are You? And Jesus said unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many*

things to say and to judge of you: but He that sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him. They understood not that He spoke to them of the Father. Then said Jesus unto them, When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall you know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father has taught Me, I speak these things. And He that sent Me is with Me. This made Christ's life so calm, so deeply joyous amid all its sorrow—"He that sent Me is with Me." Servant of God, can you say the same? If so, it is your joy, your confidence, your strength! God grant that we may, each one of us, realize that blessed Presence of our Lord!

29. *The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.* Christ could truly say that. Oh, that it might be true of us, too!

30, 31. *As He spoke these words, many believed on Him, Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples indeed.* "If you became My disciples because of what I said, will you believe what I shall yet say? Are you prepared to take in still further revelations and to receive whatever I shall teach you? If so, 'then are you My disciples indeed'"

32. *And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* Some who heard this message of our Lord caught at it—they were always on the watch for anything to quibble at and contradict and, therefore—

33, 34. *They answered Him, We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how say You, You shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin.* Or, "the slave of sin." There is the test of your position—if you do the devil's dirty work, you are his servant. If you delight in sin then you can hear your fetters clank if the ears of your conscience are but open—"Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin."

35-37. *And the servant abides not in the house forever: but the Son abides always. If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed. I know that you are Abraham's seed.* "I know what a boast you make of that."

37-39. *But you seek to kill Me because My Word has no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father. They answered and said unto Him, Abraham is our father.* Jesus had admitted that, as a matter of temporal descent, but He denied it as a matter of real fact.

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

"NOLI ME TANGERE"
("TOUCH ME NOT")
NO. 2561

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 20, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 4, 1888.

"Jesus said unto her, 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.
John 20:17.

I COMMENCE my discourse by remarking that it was very amazing that our Lord Jesus Christ, after His Resurrection, should give so early and so clear a manifestation of Himself to Mary Magdalene. Out of her He had cast seven devils. I suppose it was literally so and that there had been in her a great deal of spiritual as well as moral defilement. It may not really be so, but it certainly was the current notion of the early Church that Mary Magdalene was not only a great sufferer who had been relieved, but a great sinner who had been purified. Yet she is the first to hear a word from the risen Christ and to behold Him face to face! I may be addressing some great sinner at this moment. Dear Friend, the greatness of your sin may not prevent you from yet occupying a first place among the saints! If you seem to be sorely beset by Satan, as though seven devils were in you, there is no reason why you should not be filled with the seven spirits of God and become even a leader in the Church of Christ! There are first that shall be last, but there are also last that shall be first. Such a case as that of Mary Magdalene should give great encouragement to those of you who seem to be far away from Christ—if He calls you to humble penitence and childlike confidence in Himself, you may yet be one of the nearest and dearest of His disciples—and His manifestation of Himself to you may be even clearer and sweeter than to some of the more publicly known among His people.

The special thing to be noted about Mary Magdalene is that she had gone to the grave to find Christ. She had made a mistake about the con-

dition in which she would find Him, but she had made no mistake about this point, that she must somehow find Him—and when the other disciples, having repaired to the sepulcher and not seen Him, had gone their way—she still remained. There she stands, to weep if she cannot find her Lord, for she feels that nothing else will content her. She must wait at the sepulcher until she finds Him. And, my dear Friends, if there is anyone here who *will* find Christ, it is the one who *must* find Him! When you are at such an extremity that you say, "Give me Christ, or else I die," you shall have Christ! And when, as a child of God, your heart and your flesh cry out for Him. When you have a hungering and a thirsting after Him that cannot be stopped, then He will manifest Himself to you as He does not to the world. It will be a happy thing for you, if, having come into this place seeking the Lord, you should, all of a sudden, discover Him to be here and would even hear Him speak your name as he said, "Mary," and she responded at once, "Rabboni, my dear Master." Oh, that your eyes might be opened, my Brother, if they are shut! My Sister, may you have given to you the spiritual perception which will discern the Presence of the spiritual Christ who is in the midst of His people even now! May you, on the seat where you are sitting, feel as you have not felt of late—ravished, carried away into a holy ecstasy with this thought, "My Lord has come to me! He has spoken to me! He has revealed Himself to me! I perceive Him and I rejoice in Him!"

We11 then, if you are in that happy state, my text is addressed to you, for no Scripture is of any private interpretation. If true to Mary Magdalene, it is also true to all who are in the same condition as Mary Magdalene was. Right down these 18 or 19 centuries, the voice of Christ comes sounding to persons who are like her to whom that message was first uttered! He who said to Mary, "Touch Me not, but go to My brethren," says the same thing to every Mary and every John who has suddenly discovered Him to be present with them! As far as the language of Christ on that occasion is capable of adaptation to anyone's case, so far does the Spirit of God speak it to that person now.

I. The first thing that I see in my text deserving of notice is THE CAUTION. There stands the Lord Jesus Christ and Mary perceives that it is the Lord. And the first impulse of her being is to grasp Him and hold Him lest He should vanish. Yet the Master keeps her from too near an approach, saying, "Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended." What does this caution teach us?

Well, first, it teaches that *we may make mistakes even when we are nearest to our Lord* and enjoying the most rapturous fellowship with Him. There are things which we may try to do which we are not allowed to do.

O Brothers and Sisters, where will not sin follow us? If we lay our hands upon the horns of the altar, sin will follow us even there! We cannot shut our door so fast as to shut out Satan—neither can we be so engrossed in prayer as to be sinless even then. Our very prayers need to be prayed over! Our tears need to be wept over! Our repentance has something in it that needs to be repented of! Our faith is mixed with unbelief and our spiritual life, itself, often has much of death about it. Sin penetrates our holy things and however near we may get to Christ, we may still make blunders and mistakes—and the Master may have to say to us, as He said to Mary, "Touch Me not."

The kind of mistake into which we may fall is indicated by the text, for we are very apt to carnalize spiritual things. When our Lord gave to His disciples the ordinance of bread and wine to be an emblem of His body and His blood, very soon even good men began to talk as if there were some kind of witchcraft or black magic about it, so that the bread did actually become His flesh and the cup did literally become His blood. That was carnalizing a great spiritual Truth of God. The most of us are so unspiritual—we are so affected by our senses—that we soon bring down pure spiritual Truth into the groveling regions of flesh and sense. It is very possible for you to do this even when you are in communion with Christ. You may get to think of Christ according to some picture you have seen—you may even have before your mind's eye some image of Him, though you would abhor with all your heart all image worship and picture worship! Yet it is easily done by the mind and so you may be carnalizing—making into flesh, as it were—materializing what should be pure spiritual worship!

It is easy to make your love of Christ to be no longer spiritual, but sensuous, until even your enjoyment of Christ's Presence may come to be no true devotion at all. I have no doubt that many a man feels very pious in the dim religious light of some old cathedral when the organ peals forth and tender tones are heard—when the choir, or, if you will, the whole body of the people sing, there is a feeling all over the audience which is mistaken for true religion—yet it is often precisely the same feeling which is produced by an orchestra and by good music anywhere! It would be produced if the song was in Italian and if not a word of it was understood! And to imagine that this is true worship is a mistake, indeed! It is simply that the ear is pleased, the taste is gratified—there is a mysterious influence in the solemn aisle and vaulted roof—but that is all. Never make that blunder, dear Friends, for if you do, the Savior will have to say to you, "Do not give Me material things in the place of spiritual communion." It is not to be a matter of the body of Christ grasped by the

hands—soul must commune with soul and spirit with spirit, and our fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ must be through the Holy Spirit—and not after any carnal method.

We may blunder, again, when we are very near to Christ, by seeking after that which we really do not need. Was it wrong for Mary to try to touch the Lord? Certainly not, for He permitted Thomas to put his finger into the print of the nails and to thrust his hand into His side. He also said to all His disciples, "Handle Me, and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have." It would have been wrong if Thomas and the other Apostles had not touched the Master, yet the Lord refused that touch to Mary. She did not need it—she knew that He was the Christ and that He was risen from the dead! Thomas doubted it and the other disciples had some lingering questions, hence they were allowed to have certain signs which Mary did not need and which the Savior did not let her have.

I have known some very feeble-minded Christians who have been cheered by a dream. It seems to me the most absurd thing in the world is to be encouraged by a dream, yet it encouraged them. Why have not I had such a dream? Because I do not need it and it would be of no use to me. I believe there are some minds so feeble that they would scarcely get any faith at all if there were not some touch of the supernatural about them. And the Lord may permit it to them, but do not you ordinary Christians begin to crave anything of that kind, for you do not need it and you will not have it! You should rise to the far loftier dignity of those of whom Christ said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Cast yourself on Christ! Spiritually believe in Him and so realize Him—do not ask for what you really do not need—for these signs and tokens are not meant for you.

Once more, in our Lord's Presence, we may sometimes make a mistake by *asking to have, now, what it will be better for us to have, by-and-by.* See how Jesus puts it to Mary, "Touch Me not"—that is, not *now*—"for I am not yet ascended." There will be opportunity for all that in good time. Did you go up into your little room, the other night, and pray, "Lord, if I am, indeed, Your child, give me now such raptures as I have heard your servant Rutherford had"? Yet you have not had them. Well, do not worry about that—you are not yet fit for them. "Touch Me not," says Christ. "Ask not this of Me just yet—another day this experience will be more appropriate, less dangerous and more useful." Do you not see that you may make a mistake, even when you are with your Master, by asking what is not good for you, or at least what is not good for you just then?

I think also that the Lord said to Mary, "Touch Me not," because He meant to add, "but go to My brethren." This teaches us that *it is very easy for spiritually-minded people to get to be selfish in their enjoyments.* I have known some who spent a great part of their lives in a meditative, contemplative enjoyment of Christ. And God forbid that we should altogether blame them! But there is a more excellent way—it is sometimes better to go and tell our Brethren good news from Christ than it is for us to have fellowship with Him. I have often known what it is to be enjoying my Master's Presence when the time has come for preaching—and I have been inclined to wish that I might stay with Him—but it is wrong to think so. There is an old Romish story which has a good lesson in it. A monk was in his cell and he thought he saw a vision of Christ, but just as he was looking with rapture upon his Lord, the bell rang and he knew that it was his turn to take his place at the monastery gate to feed the poor that were standing there. As he left his cell, he heaved a deep sigh, and said, "Ah, me, that I should have this work to do and lose the company of my Lord!" He took his turn of an hour or two at waiting on the poor and when he went back to his cell, with a heavy heart, thinking that he should never see that blissful sight again, there was his Master waiting for him and a voice said to him, "If you had stayed, I would have gone. But as you went, I have stayed to manifest Myself to you."

Take the meaning out of that legend and you will learn that if you shut yourself up in your room rather than go down to the Sunday school, you will make a great mistake. I am persuaded that there are some good Christian people who have two spiritual meals every Sabbath—and do not get very fat, even then—who would be much stronger in soul if, after they have had their one meal, they went out among the poor and needy, seeking the lost ones for Christ and telling them of His love. If this hint shall reach some living, loving heart and make it a little wiser in its course of action, it will bring great glory to God.

II. I have taken up so much time with the caution, that I must be very brief upon the second head which is THE MISSION—"Go to My brethren." Mary Magdalene, instead of remaining in solitary communion with Christ, was sent upon a mission and that was for two reasons.

First, *it was better for herself.* Hear this, dear Friends, it is better for you to do good to others than to have all the enjoyment of Christ to yourself—better for you to be turned out into the cold to go and comfort the distressed, than for you to stay in the warmth of your Master's Countenance and *not* do good to others!

Secondly, *it was better for the disciples.* However bright and happy Mary might be with Christ, that would not help Peter and James and

John and the other disciples. They were all sorrowing, for they were all doubting. They thought their Master dead. They did not yet understand the saying that He had risen from the grave. Surely Mary must not be selfish—she has seen the Lord, so she must remember that others have not seen Him—and she is therefore bid to go and deliver to them a message from Christ.

It is very interesting to notice that Mary did not stay a minute after the Master said to her, "Go." As soon as the Lord commissioned her, away she went! The next verse says, "Mary Magdalene went"—with swift feet she hastened to the place where the disciples were—"Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and that He had spoken these things to her." Come, my Brothers, come, my Sisters—leave, for a while, the happy quiet nook where you met with Jesus! Come out and tell others what you have seen. Who knows but that they, also, will be led to see Jesus? And when you have told what you have *seen*, do what is still better—tell what He has *said*! What you have seen is good, but there may be a mistake in it. What Christ has spoken is perfection and there is no error in that. Relate your own experience and tell the Gospel, too, to all with whom you come into contact—and cease not to do so. To see Christ is blessed, but unless we tell what we have seen, the blessing may be like a talent in a napkin, or a candle under a bushel. I would like to come round to each one of you and to say, "Dear Brother, dear Sister, do you live in the light of God's Countenance? Has Jesus Christ shone upon you? Is He your Beloved and are you His beloved? Then come and let Him have the use of your tongue! Let Him have the use of those bright eyes of yours to tell with beaming countenance what the Lord has done for you and what He has said that He will do for others!

III. Now, thirdly, we have to consider THE TITLE—"Go to *My brethren*." Do you hear that? "Go to *My brethren*." I do not remember that the Lord Jesus ever called His disciples His brethren till that time. He called them "servants." He called them, "friends." But now that He has risen from the dead, He says, "My brethren."

Notice then, first, *they were His brethren, though He was about to ascend to His Throne.* The fact that Christ had risen from the dead did not take Him further away from His people—it brought Him nearer, for He goes on—"and say to them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father." It is clear that there is no greater distance between us and Christ, now that He has ascended, than there was when He had not ascended—no, that inasmuch as He did not call them brethren while He was yet among them before His death and did call them brethren when He said, "I ascend

unto My Father, and your Father"—if there is any difference, Christ ascended is nearer to us than Christ on the earth!—

"Now though He reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great!
Well He remembers Calvary,
Nor let His saints forget."

This is a very blessed Truth of God, but it is a great mystery. I can understand that Christ is my Brother when I see Him weary, sitting on the well at Sychar. When I see Him in the garden, agonizing even unto sweat of blood, I know that He is my Brother. But if my eyes could see Him as John saw Him, when, "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His Countenance was as the sun shines in its strength," I think I would need great help to call Him, "Brother," then! And I might not need to do so, for it is not said that the disciples called Christ, "Brother," but that *He* called them, "brethren." Oh, for Grace to believe that the crowned, reigning, exalted Christ is the Brother of our soul! His Nature in Heaven is our nature! He has a sympathy in Glory with His people still in tribulation. He is pleading our cause in Heaven as much as ever He did on earth and He is as truly our Covenant Head—as really one with us—now, as ever He was when He was here. And hence, when He had risen and was about to ascend, He said, "Go to My brethren."

There is another side of this Truth of God that is worth noticing—*they were His brethren, though they had forsaken Him in His shame.* I was reading, in the life of the famous Thomas Boston, the author of *The Fourfold State,* that one day he was very burdened and depressed in spirit, and was walking up and down his room in great trouble about his own standing before God, for, mark you, they who lead others to Christ and help others to confidence in Him, often have trembling in their own soul—as Boston had at that time. It happened that his little daughter was in the room and she said to him, "Father, Jesus said, 'Go to My brethren.' They were His brethren, still, though they had forsaken Him." Boston said, "In a moment, I caught at that." They were still His brethren, although there was one of them who had denied Him with oaths and curses! Yet that very one was especially mentioned by the angel who said, "Tell His disciples *and Peter*." All the rest forsook Him and fled yet Jesus said, "Go to My *brethren."* This is a tie which you cannot break!

If you had a brother who had misbehaved himself. And if you had been obliged to advise him to flee the country and he had gone far away—and you knew that he was living an evil life—yet he would still be your brother. Born of the same parents, the bond between you two must last on. I believe in the final perseverance of the saints and I cannot

make out how those get on who do not believe it. If Christ was my Brother yesterday, He will be my Brother to all eternity. I do not believe in these relationships coming to an end—they seem to me to be fixed. My child is my child forever, let him be what he may. And if I am Christ's brother, and Christ is my Brother, we are joined together by a bond which cannot be broken. "*Quis separabit?*" "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

Come, Brothers and Sisters, listen to me! Have you been getting cold in heart? Still, Christ is your Brother and He acknowledges it. As I have reminded you, the Master did not call His disciples, "brethren," till after they had all forsaken Him. What? Does His Grace seem to grow as our sin grows? It seems so—"Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound." This wondrous love ought to break your hearts. If any of you have been false to Christ. If you have been ungrateful, cold, unspiritual—will not this bring you back? He still acknowledges you as His! He still calls you brethren. Come along back to Him—let there be no time lost! Come weeping to His feet and say, "My Brother, I confess my transgressions and ask pardon of You because You change not and You still call me Your brother." I will not enlarge upon this theme, though it is a very sweet one. It is a sort of cluster of Eshcol. I should have liked to press and squeeze it till it filled the cup with its generous juice, but I hand it over to you. Take it home and rejoice that your Lord still says, "Go to My brethren."

IV. Lastly, we have to consider the message, THE TIDINGS. "Go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God."

Notice that *this message was far above their fears.* They thought that He was dead. "Oh, no," He says, "I ascend." They thought His body had been taken away and they should never have the mournful pleasure of knowing where it was. Surely the guards or somebody had broken the seal and stolen away that blessed form! But He shows how vain were their fears, for He says, "I ascend." Now, child of God, whatever your fears are, throw them all out! You have no need of any of them! If Christ is yours and you are trusting in Him, fear not! The Lord says to you, "Fear not," and will you keep on fearing when He bids you not to fear? I pray you, do not! What you dread will never come to pass. There is something infinitely better than that in store for you!

In the next place, *this message was above their hopes,* for all that they hoped for was that they might find the dead body of Christ. But He talks about ascending, so He is alive and their hopes are far exceeded! What are your hopes, dear Brothers and Sisters? Are you hoping to have some

good thing from the Lord? There is something better than that laid up for you! "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

Further, *this message was beyond their wishes,* for I am sure that when they knew that Christ was alive, they wanted Him to stay with them. It would have cheered them very much if Christ had said, "Go tell My brethren that I am going to stay with them for the next hundred years." No, no, no! They were to have more than they wished for—it was expedient for them that Christ should *not* stay with them. It was to their advantage that He should go to be with the Father—it would bring them greater blessings to have Him gone than to have Him tarry—so that the message sent to them was above their wishes. And the Lord will do for you more than you wish for. He will be better to you than your highest desire—therefore be of good cheer!

But what Mary had to say to them was also *beyond their knowledge,* their comprehension, beyond the grasp of their understanding. As yet they knew not that Christ must rise from the dead, so I am sure that they did not know what He meant by ascending. But it was true, though they did not understand it. Blessed be God, there are thousands of blessings true to you although you cannot yet get a grip of them! God will do more for you than you can understand. Your imagination may enlarge itself, yet He will go beyond that. I quoted, just now, Paul's words, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Now think some great thought, like one who lay dying and said, "Oh, for big thoughts!" We shall not need big thoughts, then, for we shall come into the region of great realities. But however great your thoughts, Christ can exceed them. He said to His disciples, "I am going up into Glory to plead for you." They did not know what He meant, yet His words brought them incalculable blessings.

I think I hear somebody say, "Well, I am so glad I can get as far as that, I can feel comfort in Christ's ascending to my Father." Yes, but I want you to go further than that, for I am to tell you that He is coming again! There is always to be something yet beyond—whatever you attain to, there is something more to be reached. That same Jesus who went up from us into Heaven, will so come in like manner as they saw Him go up into Heaven. With the trumpet of the archangel and with the voice of God, He shall descend a second time upon the earth, no more to suffer, no more to invite disobedient and rebellious men who shall reject Him—but He shall come to rule the nations with a rod of iron and to gather together His own people that He may be "admired in them that believe." This is the great hope of the Church! Reach forward to it and be not sat-

isfied with anything that as yet you have received, or that as yet you understand. O heirs of immortality, infinite bliss opens before you! Unspeakable glory awaits you! Be of good courage and if, for the present, you may not have all the fellowship with Christ you really wish for, because He says, "Touch Me not," yet wait till you shall be taken up, or He shall come again to receive you unto Himself, for then, where He is, you shall also be, with all the godly company that has gone before!

As for you who have no part nor lot in this matter, I am very sorry for you. I would God that you had. Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall have all this and much more than tongue can tell. Oh, that you would believe in Him, now, and live forever! God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 20 AND 21.

The 20th Psalm is a prayer for the king going forth to the conflict—a prayer for David. Better still, a prayer for great David's greater Son. The 21st Psalm is a song of victory for the returning conqueror, it is a *Te* Deum, as the King has triumphed and has returned from the conflict to enjoy the congratulations of His loyal subjects.

Psalm 20:1. *The LORD hear you in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend you.* This is a prayer for David, a prayer for Jesus and a prayer for every child of God. "Jehovah hear you in the day of trouble." What do you need? Remember that the Lord gives you this promise, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." "The name of the God of Jacob defend you." The God that took care of Jacob when he slept with a stone for his pillow. The God that guarded him when he was a stranger in a strange land and brought him home again. The God that wrestled with him at Jabbok, the God that made all things work for him, instead of against him, as he feared "the name"—the Character, the Attributes, the Glory—"of the God of Jacob defend you."

2. *Send you help from the sanctuary.* "Help from the holy place, help from the sprinkled blood, help from the Mercy Seat, help from the golden pot that had the manna, help from Aaron's rod that budded, help from Him that shone between the cherubim—send you help from the Holy of Holies.

2. *And strengthen you out of Zion.* That is to say, with His own power, His own Glory, which He manifests in the midst of His people.

3. *Remember all your offerings, and accept your burnt sacrifice. Selah.* This God did to His dear Son and this He is prepared to do to all His people. Whenever we give anything to the cause of God, we ought to do it with all that solemnity and all that willingness which was seen in God's own people in the olden time, remembering that it is to Him we bring it, and the chief point for our consideration is, "Will He accept it?"

4. *Grant you according to your own heart, and fulfill all your counsel.* We cannot pray this for everybody. We pray it for Christ and we pray it for the Lord's sanctified people, that He may grant them the desire of their heart and fulfill their counsel.

5. *We will rejoice in Your salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfill all your petitions.* What a wonderful prayer this is! May it be granted to each of you!—

"The Lord fulfill all your petitions."

6-9. *Now know that the LORD saves His anointed; He will hear him from His holy Heaven with the saving strength of His right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright. Save, LORD.* Or, "Hosanna."

9. *Let the King hear us when we call.* Now turn to the Psalm of victory. It corresponds very beautifully with the litany which we have just been reading.

Psalm 21:1. *The King shall joy in Your strength, O LORD; and in Your salvation how greatly shall He rejoice!* See how greatly Christ rejoices, how full His heart is of gladness as He sees God's power put forth, and God's salvation accomplished among men.

2, 3. *You have given Him His heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of His lips. Selah. For You present Him with the blessings of goodness.* That is to say, "You go before Him," as you have seen, in pictures, some great conqueror preceded by those who strewn his path with roses, so has God strewn the pathway of Christ with innumerable blessings.

3. *You set a crown of pure gold on His head.* Is He not of royal race? Has He not achieved a mighty conquest? Is He not King of kings and Lord of lords?

4. *He asked life of You and You gave it to Him, even length of days forever and ever.* "You gave Him a resurrection from the dead as our Mediator, and as such He lives."

5. *His Glory is great in Your salvation.* It is the distinguishing mark of God's salvation that Christ's Glory is great in it. In the beginning, in the middle and the end of it, everywhere you see the name of Jesus written in large letters of light. In His salvation, the Father has glorified His Son.

5-8. *Honor and majesty have You laid upon Him. For you have made Him most blessed forever: You have made Him exceedingly glad with Your countenance. For the king trusts in the LORD, and through the mercy of the Most High He shall not be moved. Your hand shall find out all your enemies.* That very hand that was nailed to the tree shall find out all the adversaries of the Cross.

8. *Your right hand shall find out those that hate You.* "Hide wherever they may, You will find them. They may stand in the high places and defy You; but You will hurl them down."

9. *You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger.* "Not only shall they be cast into the fire, but they shall, themselves, be as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger. They shall torment themselves and shall be their own destruction."

9-11. *The LORD shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Their fruit shall You destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. For they intended evil against You: they imagined a mischievous device which they are not able to perform.* But that did not diminish their sin. When a man has devised an evil tiring, even if he cannot carry it out, he is guilty of it!

12. *Therefore shall You make them turn their back, when You shall make ready Your arrows upon Your strings against the face of them.* As if God would single out the enemies of Christ to be targets for His arrows and fill them with the darts of His displeasure. Who would wish to be in such a plight as this?

13. *Be You exalted, LORD, in Your own strength: so will we sing and praise Your power.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—327, 785, 942.

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

CRIES FROM THE CROSS
NO. 2562

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 27, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 2, 1856.

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping me, and from the words of My roaring?"
Psalm 22:1.

(This was the first evening Sermon preached by Mr. Spurgeon after the fatal calamity at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall two weeks previously. [Someone yelled "Fire!" and ensuing rush to leave building by some resulted in someone being trampled to death.—Editor.] On commenting on his discourse, Mr. Spurgeon said, "The observations I have to make will be very brief, seeing that afterwards we are to partake of the Lord's Supper. I shall make no allusion to the recent catastrophe—that theme of my daily thoughts and nightly dreams, ever since it h as occurred. I hope, however, to speak about that event at some future period." This Mr. Spurgeon did, in many memorable utterances which will be included in Vol. II of his *Autobiography,* now in course of compilation).

WE here behold the Savior in the depths of His agonies and sorrows. No other place so well shows the griefs of Christ as Calvary and no other moment at Calvary is so full of agony as that in which this cry rends the air, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" At this moment, physical weakness brought upon Him by fasting and scourging, was united with the acute mental torture which He endured from the shame and ignominy through which He had to pass—and, as the culmination of His grief, He suffered spiritual agony which surpasses all expression on account of the departure of His Father from Him. This was the blackness and darkness of His horror. Then it was that He penetrated the depths of the caverns of suffering.

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" There is something in these words of our Savior always calculated to benefit us. When we behold the sufferings of men, they afflict and appall us, but the sufferings

of our Savior, while they move us to grief, have about them something sweet and full of consolation. Here, even here, in this black spot of grief, we find our Heaven while gazing upon the Cross. This, which might be thought a frightful sight, makes the Christian glad and joyous. If he laments the cause, yet he rejoices in the consequences.

I. First, in our text, there are THREE QUESTIONS to which I shall call your attention.

The first is, "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*" By these words we are to understand that our blessed Lord and Savior was, at that moment, forsaken by God in such a manner as He had never been before. He had battled with the enemy in the desert, but thrice He overcame him and cast him to the earth. He had striven with that foe all His life long and even in the garden He had wrestled with him till His soul was "exceedingly sorrowful." It is not till now that He experiences a depth of sorrow which He never felt before. It was necessary that He should suffer, in the place of sinners, what sinners ought to have suffered. It would be difficult to conceive of punishment for sin apart from the frown of Deity. With crime we always associate anger, so that when Christ died, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God"—when our blessed Savior became our Substitute—He became, for the time, the victim of His Father's righteous wrath, seeing that our sins had been imputed to Him in order that His righteousness might be imputed to us. It was necessary that He should feel the loss of His Father's smile—for the condemned in Hell must have tasted of that bitterness—and therefore the Father closed the eyes of His love, put the hand of justice before the smile of His face and left His Son to cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

There is no man living who can tell the full meaning of these words—not one in Heaven or on earth. I had almost said, in Hell there is not a man who can spell these words out with all their depth of misery. Some of us think, at times, that *we* could cry, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" There are seasons when the brightness of our Father's smile is eclipsed by clouds and darkness. But let us remember that God never really forsakes us. It is only a *seeming* forsaking with us, but in Christ's case it was a *real* forsaking. God only knows how much we grieve, sometimes, at a little withdrawal of our Father's love, but the real turning away of God's face from His Son—who shall calculate how deep the agony which it caused Him when He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

In our case, this is the cry of unbelief. In His case it was the utterance of a fact, for God had really turned away from Him for a time. O you

poor, distressed Soul who once lived in the sunshine of God's face, but are now in darkness—you who are walking in the Valley of the Shadow of Death—you hear noises and you are afraid! Your soul is startled within you, you are stricken with terror if you think that God has forsaken you! Remember that He has not really forsaken you, for—

"Mountains when in darkness shrouded,
Are as real as in day."

God in the clouds is as much our God as when He shines forth in all the luster of His benevolence! But since even the *thought* that He has forsaken us gives us agony, what must the agony of the Savior have been when He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

The next question is," Why *are You so far from helping Me?"* Up to now, God had helped His Son, but now He must tread the winepress alone—even His own Father cannot be with Him. Have you not felt, sometimes, that God has brought you to do some duty and yet has apparently not given you the strength to do it? Have you ever felt that sadness of heart which makes you cry, "Why are You so far from helping me?" But remember, if God means you to do anything, you can do it, for He will give you the power! Perhaps your brain reels, but God has ordained that you must do it and you shall do it! Have you not felt as if you must go on, even while every step you took, you were afraid to put your foot down for fear you should not get a firm foothold? If you have had any experience of Divine things, it must have been so with you. We can scarcely guess what it was that our Savior felt when He said, "Why are You so far from helping Me?" His work is one which none but a Divine Person could have accomplished, yet His Father's eyes were turned away from Him! With more than Herculean labors before Him, but with none of His Father's might given to Him, what must have been the strain upon Him? Truly, as Hart says, He—

"Bore all Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, and none to spare."

The third enquiry is, *"Why are You so far from the words of My roaring?"* The word here translated, "roaring," means, in the original Hebrew, that deep, solemn groan which is caused by serious sickness and which suffering men utter. Christ compares His prayers to those roars and complains that God is so far from Him that He does not hear Him. Beloved, many of us can sympathize with Christ, here. How often have we, on our knees, asked some favor of God and we thought we asked in faith, yet it never came? Down we went upon our knees again. There is something which withholds the answer and, with tears in our eyes, we have wrestled with God some more—we have pleaded, for Jesus' sake, but the heavens have seemed like brass! In the bitterness of our spirit we have

cried, "Can there be a God?" And we have turned round and said, "'My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from the words of my roaring?' Is this like You? Do You ever spurn a sinner? Have You not said, 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you?' Are You reluctant to be kind? Do You withhold Your promise?"

And when we have been almost ready to give up, with everything apparently against us, have we not *groaned* and said, "Why are You so far from the words of my roaring?" Though we know something, it is not much that we can truly understand of those direful sorrows and agonies which our blessed Lord endured when He asked these three questions—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring?"

II. Let as now, in the second place, ANSWER THESE THREE QUESTIONS.

The answer to the first question I have given before. I think I hear the Father say to Christ, "*My Son, I forsake You because You stand in the sinner's place.* As You are holy, just and true, I never would forsake You. I would never turn away from You, for, even as a Man, You have been holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners—but on Your head rests the guilt of every penitent—transferred from him to You and You must expiate it by Your blood. Because You stand in the sinner's place, I will not look at You till You have borne the full weight of My vengeance. *Then,* I will exalt You on high, far above all principalities and powers."

O Christian, pause here and reflect! Christ was punished in this way for you! Oh, look at that Countenance so wrung with horror—those horrors gather there for you! Perhaps in your own esteem you are the most worthless of the family—certainly the most insignificant—but the meanest lamb of Christ's flock is as much the object of purchase as any other. Yes, when that black darkness gathered round His brow and when He cried out, "Eloi, Eloi," in the words of our text, for the Lord Omnipotent to help Him. When He uttered that awfully solemn cry it was because He loved *you,* because He gave Himself for *you* that you might be sanctified here and dwell with Him hereafter! God forsook Him, therefore, first, because He was the sinner's Substitute.

The answer to the second question is, "Because *I would have You get all the honor to Yourself*—therefore I will not help You lest I should have to divide the spoil with You." The Lord Jesus Christ *lived* to glorify His Father, but He *died* to glorify Himself in the redemption of His chosen people. God says, "No, My Son, You shall do it alone, for You must wear the crown alone. And upon Yourself shall all the regalia of Your Sovereignty be found. I will give You all the praise and. therefore. You shall

perform all the labor." He was to tread the winepress alone and to get the victory and glory alone to Himself.

The answer to the third question is essentially the same as the answer to the first. *To have heard Christ's prayers at that time would have been inappropriate.* This turning away of the Divine Father from hearing His Son's prayer is just in keeping with His condition as the sinner's Surety. His prayer must not be heard! As the sinner's Surety, He could say, "Now that I am here, dying in the sinner's place, You seal Your ears against My prayer." God did not hear His Son because He knew His Son was dying to bring us near to God. And the Son, therefore, cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

III. In conclusion I shall offer you A WORD OF EARNEST EXPOSTULATION AND OF AFFECTIONATE WARNING.

Is it nothing to some of you that Jesus should die? You hear the tale of Calvary but, alas, you have dry eyes! You never weep concerning it. Is the death of Jesus nothing to you? Alas! It seems to be so with many. Your hearts have never throbbed in sympathy with Him. O Friends, how many of you can look on Christ, thus agonizing and groaning, and say, "He is *my* Ransom, *my* Redeemer"? Could you *say,* with Christ, *"My God"*? Or is God another's and not yours? Oh, if you are out of Christ, hear me speak one word—it is a word of warning! Remember, *to be out of Christ is to be without hope!* If you die unsprinkled with His blood, you are lost!

And what is it to be lost? I shall not try to tell you the meaning of that dreadful word, "*lost.*" Some of you may know it before another sun has risen. God grant that you may not! Do you desire to know how you may be saved? Listen to me. "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 be baptized is to be buried in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Have you believed in Christ? Have you professed faith in Christ? Faith is the Divine Grace which rests alone on Christ. Whoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he should feel himself to be lost—that he should know himself to be a ruined sinner and then he should believe this—"It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the very chief of sinners! You need no mediator between yourselves and Christ! You may come to Christ just as you are—guilty, wicked, poor—Christ will take you just as you are. There is no necessity for washing beforehand. You need no riches—in Him you have *all* you require—will you bring anything to, "all"? You need no garments, for in

Christ you have a seamless robe which will amply suffice to cover even the biggest sinner on earth, as well as the least!

Come, then, to Jesus at once. Do you say you do not know how to come? Come just as you are. Do not wait to *do* anything! What you need is to leave off doing and let Christ do all for you. What do you need to do when He has done all? All the labor of your hands can never fulfill what God commands. Christ died for sinners and you must *say,* "Sink or swim, I will have no other Savior but Christ." Cast yourself wholly upon Him—

"And *when your eye of faith is dim,*
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim!
Still at His footstool humbly bow,
***O Sinner! Sinner!* Prostrate now!"**

He is able to pardon you at this moment. There are some of you who know you are guilty and groan concerning it. Sinner, why do you wait? "Come, and welcome!" is My Master's message to you! If you feel you are lost and ruined, there is not a barrier between you and Heaven—Christ has broken it down. If you know your own lost estate, Christ has died for you! Believe, and come! Come, and welcome, Sinner, come! O Sinner, come! Come! Come! Jesus bids you come and as His ambassador to you, I bid you come as one who would *die* to save your souls if it were necessary—as one who knows how to groan over you and to weep over you—one who loves you even as you love yourself! I, as His minister, say to you, in God's name and in Christ's place, "Be you reconciled to God." What do you say? Has God made you willing? Then rejoice! Rejoice, for He has not made you willing without giving you the power to do what He has made you willing to do! Come! Come! This moment you may be as sure of Heaven as if you were there, if you cast yourself upon Christ and have nothing but Jesus for your soul's reliance!

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.

GRACE FOR THE GUILTY
NO. 2563

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 27, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 25, 1855.

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you."
Isaiah 44:22.

THIS declaration was not made to a pious and praying people, who kept near their God, but was spoken to idolatrous Israel—to those who, after having drunk from the fountain of living waters, turned aside to drink the drops that were to be found in broken cisterns. It was spoken to a people who, after they had tasted the good things of God and known the high privileges of true religion, yet turned aside with the nations of the world, forsook the God of Jacob, made unto themselves graven images that were not gods, provoked the Lord to jealousy and moved Him to wrath against them on account of their sins. These words of wondrous mercy were not spoken to the nation of Israel while living near God—who, notwithstanding, would have had sins to mourn over and to be forgiven—but they were addressed to a brutish and foolish nation, to a harlot people who had committed wickedness with all the idols of the heathen! They were those who had offered incense on their hills to false gods, who had made their children pass through the fire of Topheth in the Valley of the Children of Hinnom—to men who were filled with abominable and loathsome sins—men who had committed the crimes of Sodom and bowed down to Baal and Ashtaroth!

This promise was made to those who had wandered far from God, not because they repented, or because they believed, but simply and entirely of the Sovereign Grace of God, because, having set His affection upon them, He would not turn away from them because, having sworn unto their father Abraham that He would bless his seed forever, He still remembered them. He forgot them not, notwithstanding they had forgotten Him days without number—but provided them a Savior and now sends them, by the mouth of His Prophet, this comfortable assurance, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you."

We will take this text as it shall open to us gradually and, therefore, we will give you the thoughts as they come to us. [This sermon is the one described in *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography,* Volume I, Chapter 32, where the beloved preacher gives a graphic account of a certain Sabbath evening when he delivered an extempore discourse from a text which the Holy Spirit vividly impressed upon his mind *while the congregation was singing the hymn immediately before the Sermon.* Readers of the *Autobiography* will also see how timely was the sudden and unexpected extinction of the gas lights mentioned at the end of the present discourse.]

I. The first is, that A MAN'S SINS MAY BE REALLY FORGIVEN LONG BEFORE HE KNOWS IT, for it is written, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions."

If they knew it, there would be no necessity for telling it to them. If they understood in their hearts that their transgressions were blotted out, what need had they of a Prophet to come and tell them that it was so? Long before a man knows that his transgressions are pardoned, God may have pardoned and blotted them out. I do not say that a man receives actual pardon in his own soul, or a sense of justification without knowing it. I cannot believe, with some, that a man may be born again without *being aware of it.* I know there never was a natural birth without pangs and pains—and I am equally sure that there never will be a *spiritual birth* without some suffering and some agonies. A man is not to be born again when he is asleep—he is to know it and know it, he will, at some time or other in his life! Not constantly, it may be, but nevertheless he will know, even if it is only for an hour, that he is a child of God! I think he who never had one minute of assurance, never had faith. He who never knew himself to be a child of God, who never could say, "I believe in Jesus," never could see his sins blotted out—I think such an one does not know what faith is. It may endure for ever so short a time, but if it is real assurance, it springs from true faith and the man is saved.

But a man may have his sins blotted out before he knows it. And they may be blotted out when he does not believe that they are—and blotted out when he is full of doubt on the point—yes, they may be pardoned even when he cannot be persuaded that they actually are. I can tell you of persons whom, in my inmost soul, I believe to be the subjects of Divine Grace. I can see in them the marks of God's power—He has convinced them of sin, they are humble, they are penitent, they are prayerful, they feel their guilt, they confess it—yet they have a haziness about their views of the Atonement and from this arises great darkness of spirit. They cannot see the plan of salvation and because they cannot see the plan, they do not, therefore, get a joyful sense of the thing, itself. Yet if these persons were soon to die, I am well assured that before they departed this life, God would give them such a glimpse of sunshine that all

the clouds would be dissipated and they would be able to enter Heaven singing, as they waded through the stream of Jordan, "Christ is with me! Death is nothing. Christ is with me! He is my Helper and my Stay." Long before they know it, their sins are forgiven.

Besides, there is a doctrine very much scandalized by certain professors and rejected by many persons, but which I firmly believe in. I mean, the Doctrine of the Eternal and Complete Justification of All the Elect in the Person of Christ Jesus. It does seem to me that when the Divine Surety paid our debts, our debts were discharged. That when He took our guilt upon His head and suffered for us on Calvary, our sins were, in that moment, blotted out. Some will say, "But the sins were not in existence, then." No, they were not, except in the foreknowledge of God, but the foreknowing God had all those sins written in the book of His foreknowledge long before they were committed. And by the blood of Christ, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," He did forever blot out the crimes and sins of all His Covenant people, so that everyone who shall be saved at last *was* justified in Christ when He died. The sins of all who shall be saved were atoned for by Christ, though they know nothing of it until God reveals it to them, by His Spirit, in the moment when they exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If the debt was paid, then surely a full receipt was given! If the crime was then laid on Jesus' head and He was then punished for it, surely the crime ceased to be! If you say that the crime was not in existence because it was not committed—I would tell you that Christ died for it before it was committed. Therefore we are quite right in saying that it was blotted out before it was committed.

I received my pardon when I believed—but it was purchased when Christ died. In *the Person of Christ* I was as completely and as truly, in God's sight, justified then, as I am now! But I knew it not—it was not revealed to me, I could not rejoice in it, I could not be blessed by it. The blood-bought pardon could not absolve me till I had a sense of it—the pardon of Christ could not redeem me from the prison of sin until I knew about it—but yet it was virtually given. When the ransom price was paid, the freedom was really secured, though the slave was still scarred, branded and chained to his oar. He was a purchased man and would one day receive his liberty. Oh, are not your hearts gladdened and do not your eyes glisten? Though you do not know that you are pardoned, it may be true that your sins are blotted out! Though you do not know that you have been justified, it may be true that you are "accepted in the Beloved!" "Oh," says one, "if I thought there were a hope or even a chance of such a thing for me, I would go to Jesus, though my sins had 'risen like a mountain.'" Go, then, poor Sinner, and if you cannot read your pardon, there—if you cannot see the handwriting of ordinances that were against you nailed to His Cross—come back and say that I speak not the Truth of

God! There have been many sinners who went to Christ full of sin—but there never was one who came back from Him as he went! Many have gone to Him guilty, but none have been turned away from His door unforgiven! He blots out, as a thick cloud, their transgressions and, as a cloud, their sins.

A man may have his sins forgiven, then, before he knows it, and a true Christian who has come to the Lord Jesus may have his sins blotted out even when he does not believe they are. The devil can make you believe anything. No lawyer is equal to him—though some lawyers have, most undoubtedly, learned a few lessons at his hands—for not only can he make what is half the truth appear the whole truth, but he can take a lie and gild it with truth. How often does he persuade a truly justified man that he is not justified! It often comes to pass that when God has pardoned a poor sinner, the devil will come to him and tell him that he is not pardoned—and so much logic will he use with him, that he will make him believe that he is not pardoned, although he really is. Though every crime of that man has been forgiven long ago, though all his iniquities have been cast into the depths of the sea, Satan will agitate his conscience, stir up his soul, bind him with unbelief, cast gravel into his food, cause him to eat wormwood and drink the water of gall, as Jeremiah has said, until he will not only deny that he has ever tasted that the Lord is gracious, but he will be in such despair that he will fancy it is not possible that he can ever be saved. Satan will persuade a justified man that he is yet "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."

Are there not some of you who have had many pleasant days, many sweet hours of fellowship with Christ, but in some dark moment the thought crossed your mind that you might be a hypocrite, after all? From that hour you have not been able to come near to Him and though you have trusted under the shadow of His wings, yet you have not seen the light of His Countenance. Well, but let me tell you, Brothers and Sisters, the pardon is not revoked because it is concealed from view! The pardon is just as good when you cannot see it as when you do see it. A pardon is a pardon and though the condemned criminal does not see the pardon, it is not revoked. God takes care of our pardon for us! He does not put it into our hands, for Satan might take it away from us, but He lets us have a copy of it to read and though Satan steals the copy, he cannot get the original—that is safe in the archives of Heaven! Up there, in the Ark of God, where He keeps the deeds of the universe, there He preserves the writings of the pardon of our sins! Yes, though I may doubt whether I am pardoned, if I really am so, I am so! And I ought not so much to depend upon my own frames and feelings as upon this—God has said to me once, "I have blotted out your sins." He has said it to me twice! I read it in His Word and though Satan says they are not removed, I believe they

are. And I will stand fast in this assurance because God said, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions."

II. Another remark upon our text is that NOTHING CAN SO STRONGLY LEAD A MAN TO COME TO GOD AS A SENSE OF PARDONED SIN. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you."

Enthusiastic divines have thought that men were to be brought to virtue by the hissings of the boiling cauldron. They have imagined that by beating a Hell drum in the ears of men, they could make them believe the Gospel. That by the terrific sights and sounds of Sinai's mountain, they could drive men to Calvary. They have preached perpetually, "Do this and you are damned." In their preaching there preponderates a horrible and terrifying voice. If you listened to them, you might think you sat near the mouth of the Pit and heard the "dismal groans and sullen moans," and all the shrieks of the tortured ones in Perdition! Men think that by these means sinners will be brought to the Savior. They, however, in my opinion, think wrongly! Men are frightened into Hell, but not into Heaven. Men are sometimes driven to Sinai by powerful preaching. Far be it from us to condemn the use of the Law of God, for, "the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ," but if you want to get a man to Christ, the best way is to bring Christ to the man! It is not by preaching Law and terrors that men are made to love God—

"Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone.
But a sense of blood-bought pardon,
Soon dissolves a heart of stone."

I sometimes preach "the terror of the Lord" as Paul did when he said, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." But I do it as did the Apostle—to bring them to a sense of their sins. The way to bring men to Jesus, to give them peace, to give them joy, to give them salvation through Christ, is by God the Spirit's assistance, to preach Christ—to preach a full, free, perfect pardon. Oh, how little there is of preaching Jesus Christ! We do not preach enough about His glorious name. Some preach dry doctrines, but there is not the unction of the Holy One revealing the fullness and preciousness of the Lord Jesus. There is plenty of, "Do this and live," but not enough of, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." O sweet Jesus, have not some of Your disciples forgotten You? Have not some of Your preachers almost lost the sound of Your glorious name and scarcely know its blessed pronunciation? Send us, once again, we pray You, the spirit of love and of a sound mind, that we may preach more fully Jesus Christ our Lord!

But now, my Friends, let me ask you earnestly—when did you ever feel, under a sense of sin, the most inclination to come to the Savior? I think you will reply at once, when you felt that there was hope for you

and that He had blotted out your sins! No man will come to Jesus while he thinks harshly of Him. But when he has sweet thoughts of Him, then will he come. You have no doubt heard the old figure, borrowed from John Bunyan, of a certain army that was inside a city and which was attacked by another host. The king outside said, "Give up the city, directly, or I'll hang every man of you." "No," they said, "we will fight to the death and we will never give up!" "I will burn your city," he said, "and utterly destroy it, raze it to the ground and slay your wives and children. I will wholly cut off the race and exterminate you." "Ah," they said, "then we will fight till we die! We will never open the doors." Seeing that threats were of no avail, he sent another message, "If you will only open your gates and come out to me, I will let you go away, bag and baggage. I will give all of you your lives and liberty and, what is more, I will let you have your lands, again, for a small tribute, and you shall be my servants and friends forever." "Straightway," says the parable, "they unbarred the gates and came tumbling out to the monarch." That is the way, by the Spirit's help, to get a sinner to come in penitence to Jesus—to tell him that the Lord says this—"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you."

Come along, Beloved! Why are you afraid of Jesus? He says, "Return unto me; for I have redeemed you." Come along, Brothers and Sisters, to the Lord Jesus if you are a sinner! I speak to that one who feels himself a lost and guilty one. Come with me to Jesus, for He has blotted out your transgressions as a thick cloud and, as a cloud, your sins. And He has redeemed you. "Oh," says one, "I dare not come in! He will frown upon me." Come and try Him! He says He has forgiven you—come in at the door and you will find it true that Christ has forgiven you! I think I see you standing and looking at yourself and saying, "Oh, was I not worse than ten thousand fools to be afraid to come in—to be afraid to trust Him when He had pardoned me beforehand? Was I not worse than ignorant to stand back from my best Friend, as if He had been a lion—to stay away from the dear Jesus who had purchased my ransom, as if He were my foe?"

One would think, dear Friends, when you are so loath to come to Christ, that you were coming to receive condemnation instead of coming to be saved! Men come unwillingly to execution, but must they come as unwillingly to Christ as they do to the slaughter? You think Him some angry Judge. You have bad ideas of my sweet Jesus, or else you would not keep away from Him when He is continually crying, "Return unto Me!" "Return unto Me!" O that you would so love Him and rejoice in Him, that you would feel the greatest pleasure in the world in coming to Him! [Some alarm was here occasioned by the gas lights suddenly going out.

After the temporary confusion had subsided, Mr. Spurgeon proceeded to address the large and excited auditory on a different subject. In his *Autobiography*, he mentions that both the discourses delivered under these unusual circumstances were blessed to the conversion of some of his hearers.]

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 125.

Verse 1. *They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abides forever.* Various conquerors have destroyed the buildings upon Mount Zion, but the mountain, itself, is still there. None have ever dug it up and cast it into the Mediterranean Sea. It stands fast and will stand there as long as the world endures. And "they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion"—they shall abide as firmly as that sacred mountain does! Nothing can move them, or remove them. They are in the hands of Christ and none can pluck them from there. "My Father, who gave them to Me, is greater than all," says Christ, "and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." Oh, what strength does faith give to a man!

2. *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people from this time forth and forever.* This verse shows the Believer's safety, as the former one showed his stability. As the mountains stood to guard the sacred city, so does God surround His people as a wall of fire. Before any can hurt the Believer, they must first break through the ramparts of the Godhead! It is not merely said that horses of fire and chariots of fire are round about His people, though that is true, but that the Lord, Himself, surrounds them, and that not occasionally, but "from this time forth and forever." I believe in the eternal safety of the saints and I would base it upon these two verses if there were no other Scriptures to that effect! If they never are to be moved any more than Mount Zion and if God is round about them forever, then they must live and they must stand. There is no, "if," or, "but," put in here—there is no, "provided that they behave themselves," and so on. No, but, trusting in God, they shall never be moved and God will surround them as their sure defense! I fancy I hear someone say, "If it is so, why am I tried and troubled?" Ah, my Brother, it was never contemplated that you should be free from trouble! There is a rod in the Covenant and if you never feel it, you may suspect that you are *not* in the Covenant!

3. *For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.* You will feel that rod, but it shall not rest upon you. The days of persecution shall be shortened for the elect's sake and though, perhaps, the devil may be more furious

with you than ever—having great wrath because he knows that his time is short—yet God will put an end to your suffering, your persecution, your oppression, for He knows your frame and he is aware that, perhaps, if the temptation were pushed too far, you might yield. Therefore will He makes a way of escape for you. He means to try and test you, but not too much. He will abate the fierceness of man's wrath and deliver you.

4. *Do good, O LORD, unto those that are good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.* True Believers are good—especially are they good at heart, for Divine Grace has made them so and God, therefore, will do them good. He will bless them more and more. He will sanctify them and prepare them for the ineffable goodness that is at His right hand forever and ever.

5. *As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel.* There are—there always have been—in the Church of God some who have been the Church's dishonor. They have crooked ways of their own and, in due time, under stress of persecution, or through temptation, they "turn aside unto their crooked ways." They leave the path of trustfulness and holiness, as Judas did, as Demas did, as many have done. What will God do with them? He will "lead them forth." He will show them up. He will bring them into His Light. And in what company will He lead them forth? Why, "with the workers of iniquity," for if they were not such in outward action, they were really so in thought and heart! And where will He lead them? He will lead them forth to execution—they shall go among the malefactors—they shall be led forth to die. But will this hurt the Lord's people? No. When the chaff is separated from the wheat, the wheat shall be all the purer. "Peace shall be upon Israel." All the Lord's chosen, pleading, princely people—His Israel—shall have peace upon them! May we all be found among them, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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

STRANGE WAYS OF LOVE
NO. 2564

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, ARPIL 3, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 8, 1883.

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her."
Hosea 2:14.

The first part of this chapter is very dark, but the second part is clear daylight. As we read the first verses, we tremble, for we seem to stand at the foot of Sinai when it is altogether on a smoke. But when we reach the second half of the chapter, we can say that, "we have come unto Mount Zion." We hear no sound of trumpet, but the voice of that blood "which speaks better things than that of Abel." The reason for this is not that God has changed, nor that the person who is here spoken of has changed—up to this point there is no change indicated in the person—it is the same unchaste, unholy, obstinate, rebellious, ungrateful creature. Yet there is a wonderful change in the words spoken and the reason is because there is a change of dispensation—the sinner is brought from under Law to come under Grace! God no longer convinces of sin by the terrors of the Law, but He comes to deal with the poor guilty soul on terms of love and mercy! This is the great wonder of wonders that ever it should be truly said that, "in due time Christ died for the ungodly," and that he is saved who believes on Him that justifies the ungodly! Christ died for us, not as saints, not as godly persons, but as the ungodly! Our subject is all about the dealings of Divine Love with guilty sinners, by which God brings them unto Himself. I shall speak of four things.

I. The first is that in our text, FOR GOD'S DEEDS OF LOVE, THERE IS A REASON BEYOND ALL REASON.

The text begins with, "therefore." God is very fond of that word, for He never acts illogically. There is always a good reason for all that He does. But His ways are not our ways, neither are His thoughts our thoughts and, sometimes, our logic is altogether baffled and our reasoning faculties seem as if they could not in any way follow the working of the mind of God, if such an expression may be used concerning His wondrous thoughts.

Here, then, is a, "therefore," but what is the argument of which this is the conclusion? Two of the most eminent writers on Hosea who wrote in Latin in the olden time—and were both Romanists—think that the word, "therefore," ought to be expunged, for they cannot see any reason for its being here. Neither, according to Romanist teaching, is there any reason

for it. It is a Scripture nut which is too hard to be cracked if salvation is by human merit and by human works. "Therefore" is a manifest *non sequitur* in such a place as this if that is the theory. But he who understands that salvation is *not* of works, nor in any degree of human merit, but entirely an act of the free and Sovereign Grace of God—that it is not of man, nor by man—he has spied out a method of reasoning, here, which the workaholic will never be able to discover! There is a reason, though it is beyond all reason.

Note, then, first, that when God is about to save a man, *He finds a reason for Grace where there is none.* Where there is no reason in the man, God, nevertheless, finds one. There never can be any reason in a man's sin why God should pardon it—at least we cannot see how it can be so—yet David did when he prayed, "For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great," as if the very greatness of it was turned into a reason why it should be forgiven! This is a singular argument. When a man has rebelled against the Lord, is that a reason why God should publish an act of amnesty and oblivion? When man refuses to accept forgiveness, is that any reason why the Lord should go out of His way to change that sinner's obstinacy so as not to let him destroy his own soul? I fail to see any reason for it, but God finds a reason, "for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." "He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

We think it always wise to enquire whether a person who applies for alms is a worthy person, for we like to give to deserving people. But God likes to give to the unworthy and undeserving—and He has a reason for it, for how could Mercy be so honored as in the forgiveness of the guilty—and how could Divine Grace get to itself so complete a victory as in reclaiming those who are utterly lost? God finds a reason where to us, at any rate, there seems to be none whatever. If, dear Friend, you are self-condemned and can see no reason why the Lord should have mercy upon you, yet He spies a reason in the very fact of your being unable to see any! He finds, in that very brokenness, misery and helplessness of yours, a reason why His own sweet love and mercy should come and deal with you, even with *you*.

Further, God not only finds a reason where we cannot see any, but *He makes a reason which overrides all other reasons.* There was a reason why He should have put Israel away altogether. She had been, as it were, espoused to Him—that is the parallel that is given to us—and if it seems, in your judgment, wrong that I should use the parallel, I cannot help it—it is in the Bible and I am going to follow it. God compares Israel to a wife who has left her husband, broken her marriage vow and become unchaste, filthy and polluted. In such a case as that, there are a thousand reasons why a man says, "I cannot have her as my wife any longer. How can I dishonor myself by receiving her, again, to my house and to my heart?" Yes, just so. But God finds a reason for receiving His banished and guilty ones over and above all reasons why He should put them away. He looks over the head of the argument for their destruction and finds grounds for their salvation! These people had given themselves up to the worship of that abominable idol-god called Baal, whose very wor-

ship was full of filthiness—and you can conceive the grief of the holy God when He saw them bowing down before such an obscene deity as this! That was a reason why He should put them away and have no more to do with them. But He had in His heart a reason that was stronger than any reason in their guilt and in their crime! He had also chastened them. He had brought them very low with famine and fever, yet they had gone on in sin worse than ever! And if they seemed to return for a little while, they were soon off, again, on their wanderings. These provocations of theirs cried aloud, "Put them away! Destroy them! Have no mercy upon them!" Yet God, whose mercy endures forever, still found a reason for looking favorably on poor Israel. And He said, "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." In like manner, though you, poor conscience-stricken Sinner, may see ten thousand reasons why you should be lost, God sees a reason which is stronger than all those and which, with a louder voice, cries over their heads, "Let them live! Let them find mercy at Your hands, O God!" Thus He finds a reason that overrides every other reason.

Yes, and I go further and say that God *turns reasons against us into reasons for us.* Every sin is a reason why a sinner should perish. Every willful transgression is a reason why a man should be given over to continue in his stubbornness, but God does not reason so. In His infinite mercy, He treats our sin as though it were a necessity rather than a crime! You know how you deal with persons who are in great need. Did you ever hear a beggar who came to your door say, "Sir, I am not very badly off. I have a nice little income, but I need some relief." How much will he get out of you? He goes the wrong way to work! But here comes a man in a most dilapidated state. His garments are all in rags, his feet are on the ground, his body is emaciated, he tells you that he has not tasted food for the last two days, that he has to walk the streets at night and has nowhere to lay his head. And the worse his story is, the more he prevails with you. Now, the Lord, in His infinite mercy, taking that tender view of sinning, as if it had bred a necessity in men, loves to hear them speak with Him—not thus, "God, I thank You I am not as other men are." You know the rest of it, but the man who said *that* was *not* accepted of God! But the Lord loves to hear a man say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." That cry touches His heart. It is the greatness of men's sin which He interprets to be the greatness of their necessity and, therefore, He deals with them in mercy.

He also does this when He treats sin as if it were a disease. If a man were taken into a hospital, or if he were picked up on a battlefield and carried to the surgeon who has a large number of patients to wait upon, does the man who is suffering say, "Oh, it is a very slight affair, just a mere grazing of the skin, that is all"? He knows that if he talked so, the surgeon would pass him by to attend to the man whose wound will prove mortal if it is not stanched within a few minutes. The man who has the attention of the humane surgeon is the one who can truly say, "Sir, there is not a more severely wounded person in all this throng. My voice is failing, I am almost choked, I shall die if you do not relieve me at once." The surgeon says to the other patients, "My good fellows, you must all wait

awhile. I must see to that poor man." Now, God looks at your sin as if it were a deadly disease working in you—and the greatness of your malady becomes a plea with Him. Oh, how strange it is that the very thing which, as a matter of justice, is really against us, turns out to be for us when it comes to be a matter of pure Grace!

I want you all to put it upon that footing. You know what the woman said to the great Napoleon when she wanted him to save the life of her father. Napoleon said to her, "Woman, I have pardoned this man two or three times before." But she said, "Sir, I pray you pardon him again." The emperor answered, "I see no reason in justice why I should do so." "No, Sir," she replied, "and there is not any. But I am appealing to your mercy. It is a fine opportunity for you to show mercy, for he does not deserve it." The great man said, "That is well put. Let him live." And God will let you live when you plead on the ground of pure mercy! If you talk of justice, you are doomed, for there is nothing in the justice of God but a sharp, two-edged sword, the very touch of which will slay you! God's Throne of Justice is a place of fiery wrath which shoots devouring flames! But if you approach it by the door that is sprinkled with the precious blood of Christ, and cry to God for mercy, you shall be received with the kiss of forgiveness! Go, then, to that mercy of God which, in the very sins of men, spells out arguments for displaying itself! God does not want your fullness—He wants your emptiness—that He may fill it with His fullness. He does not want your good works, you poor sinners—He wants your bad works—that He may wash them all away. Paul says that Christ "gave Himself for our sins," and Luther's comment on that is, "He never gave Himself for our righteousness. That would not have been worth His having, but He gave himself for our sins." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*." This is the footing on which we must go to God!

They tell us that this preaching of mercy to sinners is against morality. Well, morality can take care of itself, God will take care of it. But we know that there is nothing which promotes morality like this wonderful pardoning love of God. Those who never will be reached by being told what they ought to do, for they *cannot* do it, and *will not* do it, are reached by being told what God will do for them and what Christ has *done* for them! And when they come and believe *that*, then they set about doing what is right—and good works are produced to the glory of God! But on the other theory, no man living under Heaven will ever come.

II. Now turn to the second point. In our text, notice that there is A METHOD OF POWER BEYOND ALL POWER—"I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness."

This is a singular kind of power. "I will allure her." Not, "I will drive her." Not even, "I will draw her." Or, "I will drag her." Or, "I will force her." No—"I will allure her." It is a very remarkable word and it teaches us that *the allurement of love surpasses in power all other forces.* That is how the devil ruins us—he tempts us with honeyed words, sweet utterances, with the baits of pleasure and the like. And the Lord in mercy determines that in all truthfulness, He will outbid the devil and He will win us to Himself by fascinations, enticements and allurements which shall

be stronger than any force of resistance we may offer! This is a wonderfully precious word—"I will *allure* her." I hardly know how to explain it except by reminding you of how bird catchers entice the feathered creatures with the allurements of decoys that sing them into the net, or how a mother allures her little child who is just beginning to walk. You have seen her hold out an orange, or an apple, or a sweet, that the little one may leave the chair against which it is leaning and come to her arms. That is the meaning of the word, "I will *allure* her." God is trying this plan with guilty men and so tries it as to succeed, for there is in it a power beyond all other power!

Other forms of power had been tried upon Israel. She had been afflicted—God declared that He would strip her even to nakedness! And He had done so, yet she did not turn to Him. He said to her, "I will hedge up your way with thorns," but she went on right over the thorns. Then He said, "I will make a wall, that she shall not find her paths." But she broke through the wall. Affliction of itself cannot bring a man to Christ—you may flog him till he gets more wicked. He may be chastened, as Ahaz was, and yet, like he, go further astray, the more he is afflicted, No dear Friends, the power of God's Grace—the power of His infinite allurements—will be found to be much stronger than the power of affliction!

Moreover, the Lord had tried upon Israel the effect of instruction. He says, "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil." So He told her, but instruction did not help her. She sinned in the Light of God as badly as she had done in the darkness! Then He tried what could be done by exposure. He said—and it is a strong word—"I will declare her lewdness in the sight of her lovers." There are some people who are made to be thoroughly ashamed—they are caught in some secret sin. They are convicted of something which, even in the eyes of sinners like themselves, is mean and dirty—and they cannot deny it—yet they do not turn from sin. They still cling to it.

In addition to all this, the Lord had tried the power of sorrow upon sorrow, for it is written, "I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, her Sabbaths and all her solemn feasts. And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees." Though she found no mirth in sin and the way of her transgression was hard, yet Israel would not turn to God! But the sweet allurement of tenderness would succeed where all else had failed.

This was a power which was greater than those other forms of power because *the allurement of love overcomes the will to resist.* Israel could resist everything else, but she could not resist the allurements of God's Grace—they won her where nothing else could. If Christ does but touch the blind man's eyes, so that out of the corners of them he only gets one glimpse of the Savior's beauty, he must infallibly be so enamored of the Christ that he will love Him beyond all others! There are amazing beauties about the Person of Jesus, yet, by their own unaided power, men cannot see them. But if once Christ enables them to see Him as He is and they realize the power of His eternal love, then their hearts are captured and they no longer resist Him. In fetters of Grace they are led as willing captives to Christ!

Let me tell you one or two things about the Savior that I think one can never resist. There is, first, His self-denying love—that He loved His enemies—that He loved such poor creatures as we are, who could do Him no good. He was infinitely glorious and we were insignificant and, what was worse, we were opposed to Him! Yet each Believer can *say,* "He loved me and gave Himself for *me*." Out of pure, disinterested affection, He came to earth to dwell in a stable, to hang upon a woman's breast, a babe as feeble as any other babe, and then, marvel of marvels, His life on earth ended on the Cross—the cruel gallows of utmost scorn! There the Faultless One bears all our fault and because of our transgression, He is nailed to the tree, His back having first been scourged, His hands and feet pierced. Yes, and God Himself forsakes Him—not for any evil that He has done, but because He has been guilty of excess of love and has dared to put Himself in the poor sinner's place to bear the wrath of Heaven! Look at Him—can you help loving Him with His face disdained with spit and His back all gory from the cruel lash? Is He not more lovely, there, than even up yonder amidst eternal thrones? O Love, bleeding Love, dying Love! If this does not allure men, what will? But that is how God allures the sinner to Himself. He says, "I did all this for you. I lived for you. I died for you." And this wins the sinner's affections, even though he feels himself the guiltiest of the guilty.

Then our blessed Master, having risen from the dead, now charms us by the fact that amidst all His glories He is faithful to His first love. He has not forgotten you and me, though cherubim and seraphim have been singing His praises all these years, day without night. See what He is doing. He makes intercession for the transgressors and he bears upon His breastplate the names of guilty ones for whom His cry goes up that they may be forgiven and find mercy through His wondrous merit! I will not say that you *ought to* love Him, for love does not act that way. But I will say this—if you truly know Him, you cannot help loving Him—you must love Him. Thus does He allure men to Himself by His own personal charms.

The Lord draws men to Himself in different ways. I was allured to Christ very much by the hope of eternal safety. I was but a lad and I saw young men, a little older than myself, who had been very promising youths, go off into drunkenness and into vice of different kinds. And I thought that I might do the same. But when I read those words of the Apostle, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day," I was charmed with Christ as a sort of Preserver of character—an Insurer of my soul unto eternal bliss! And I came to Him for that reason. I have known others who have seen the happiness of Christians—their peace in the midst of turmoil, their joy in times of sorrow, their contentment in poverty, their calmness in prospect of death—and they have said, "If all this happiness can be had in Christ, I will come to Him for it." And in that way He has allured them. Perhaps some of you have never had any great terrors of conscience, or distress of soul—do not fret on that account! If you come by allurements, it is a Covenant way of coming. If you are fascinated by the charms of Christ, it is the very way that God declares He

will draw His erring and His guilty people. Oh, that you would yield to the fascination! I pray that you may feel the allurement and say—

"I yield—by mighty love subdued!
Who can resist its charms?
And throw myself, by wrath pursued,
Into my Savior's arms."

Do any of you feel some soft drawing? Is there a pierced hand touching you and a loving voice saying, "Seek the Lord"? Have you been very hard, up till now, but does an unusual gentleness steal over your spirit as you are sitting in this House of Prayer? Give yourself up to it—it may be that the time of Divine Grace is now upon you. I hope that it is so, that your birth-night has come and that you are passing from death unto life! We have prayed about you. We met for an hour before service and there was hard pleading for you. And God has given us the desire of our spirit and you are to come to Christ tonight! Blessed Lord, if it is so, there will be work for angels in Heaven to sing Your praises concerning a sinner that repents!

III. But now, thirdly, and with brevity, here is A CONDITION OF COMPANY BEYOND ALL COMPANY. Kindly read the text again. "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness."

If you have ever heard a sermon from this text, you have probably had it translated to you to mean that God will bring His people in trouble, but it does not mean that. It means that God *would cause Israel to be alone with Him.* It was usual, after the nuptial ceremony, for the husband to take his wife away into some lone spot for a while. The same thing constantly happens among us—when a man is married, away he goes to the seaside for a time—and he takes his spouse away to be with him alone. That is the idea in the text, the Lord says of Israel, "I will allure her to Myself" and then, "I will take her *into the wilderness.* She shall be in My company and in nobody else's company." That is just what the Grace of God does—the soul had forgotten Him, before, but now it thinks only of Him. His sweet love has so won it that it is now full of God! Instead of not thinking of Him at all, He is in his first thoughts in the morning, and in his thoughts all day long—and the last thing at night, till friends who do not sympathize say, "Why, you are going out of your mind! You are going religiously mad!" I wish that you would stay in that blessed state into which you were brought when the Lord's love was revealed to you and His allurements drew your soul to Him.

The soul in the wilderness, alone with God, *does not think of anybody else,* and *does not trust in anything else.* It used to trust in good works, but it feels as if it has not any, now, though really its first good works are just being produced. Oh, what a clearance of our finery the love of God makes when it comes into the soul! We are the most respectable people who ever lived until we know God—and then we abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes!

Now it comes to pass that God *is our only joy.* Once we had joy in the theater, or joy in the ballroom, or joy in other worldly things, but now we find true joy in God! And all other rejoicing seems only the mirth of fools and idiots. When we have once sat at the feast in our Father's House, we cannot go back to eat the husks that satisfy swine. We have something

better than that—our Lord has brought us where everything but Himself is a wilderness and our cry is, "O God, You are my God! Early will I seek You: my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water." Joy in God eats up all other joy, as Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the impostors! Now we can say of the Lord, "He is all my salvation and all my desire." Oh, to be wholly His and to enjoy all that we can enjoy of Him! This is what He means by bringing us into the wilderness. That is, into the solitary place alone with Him.

It may also be understood—and the connection requires it—that *God brings His people into the same condition into which He brought the Israelite nation of old.* It was not to afflict them that He brought them into the wilderness—it was to take them *out of affliction* that He led them there—and that is the meaning of our text. When the Lord allures His people, He takes them away from the old Egyptian bondage. He leads them through the Red Sea. He makes it roll between them and their old life and then He treats them just as He treated His people in the wilderness. That is, He provides their food. They live on manna—no longer have they their kneading troughs which they brought out of Egypt. I wonder what they did with those kneading troughs? They never needed them in the wilderness, certainly, for the manna was all ready for them when it fell.

Then, next, the Lord becomes the Guard of His people—a wall of fire round about them. He protects them by a fiery pillar at night and He is the only Guide and Leader of His people—by cloud or by fire He leads them both by night and by day. He becomes the healing of His people, for, in the wilderness, when Israel had sinned and the fiery serpent had bitten them, they looked to the bronze serpent and they lived. The Lord was the Champion and Defender of His people. Sihon, king of the Amorites, did He smite, "for His mercy endures forever; and Og, the king of Bashan, for His mercy endures forever." In the wilderness Israel had nothing but God—did they need anything else? They carried on no commerce. They had no railways. They kept no shops. Well, really, if you could go out every morning and gather your bread and if, when you needed meat, the quails came in any quantity for you to feed upon. And if your clothes never waxed old, neither did your feet swell—that would be a grand life to lead!

The Lord bring you and me under the wings of His eternal Providence and if the world should seem a wilderness to us, yet if God continues to scatter the manna and faith has but hands with which to gather it, and a joyful mouth with which to feed upon it, then, blessed be God, the wilderness is better than anywhere else! "I will allure her and bring her into the separated place where she shall walk by faith. And I will dwell with her, and walk with her. And I will be her God and she shall be Mine forever." That is the meaning of the promise—a condition of company beyond all company!

IV. Now, fourthly, we have, in our text, A VOICE OF COMFORT BEYOND ALL COMFORT. "I will speak comfortably unto her." The Hebrew is, "I will speak to her heart"—a style of speech that can only be adopted

by God who made the heart, searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men.

When the Lord gets His people all alone, what *words of comfort* He has with them! What words they are when He assures them of their full forgiveness, when they see all the sins of their former perverse life gone forever and hear the Lord say, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins." These are, indeed, comfortable words when they are spoken home to the heart! And so they are when the Lord not only tells His people that all evil is removed, but that all good is theirs—when such words as these come home to them—"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." And, "It does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." And, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Those are comfortable words when the Lord goes on to tell us of our everlasting safety—"They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever." And when in prayer He foretells our coming glory—"Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am."

I like even better that rendering, "I will speak to her heart." I heard of one who died many years ago and an old divine, who stood by his bedside, reported what he said. He had been a great professor, but he had become an apostate and turned aside. But he used to comfort himself with the universal mercy of God. And when he lay a-dying, he said to the minister, "Sir, I have made a plaster for my wound, but it will not stick." He turned over in the bed and said, "It will not stick! It will not stick!" And so he died. Ah, and unless God speaks the Gospel to the heart, it will not stick. You cannot get it to stick to the wound. It seems pretty enough and you fancy that it will heal—it is a "royal court plaster"—but, for all that, it will not stick! But when the Lord speaks His Truth home to the heart and conscience, by the Holy Spirit, and the poor trembling sinner grips it as for dear life and says, "That is mine—I will venture my soul on it! Christ has died for sinners—I am a sinner and I take Christ to be my Savior!" Then that plaster will stick! What a mercy it is, when God makes it to be so! I can speak to your ears, but I cannot speak to your hearts and, what is more, even this blessed Book of Inspiration could only appeal to the ears! Apart from the Spirit of God, it could not reach your heart. But if the Lord Himself takes His Truth, oh, how blessedly it goes home!

I tell you, you desponding and despairing ones, you may come out of the iron cage tonight! You may, this very hour, enter into joyous peace and liberty if the Spirit of God will but speak home a single text—a solitary Word—a New-Covenant Word to your spirit! Be of good cheer, then—things impossible with men are possible with God—and you may yet be singing instead of sighing, and shouting instead of groaning! Look to Jesus! All our hope lies in Him. May He save you—yes, may the Lord allure you even now! I am afraid I have not spoken gently enough to some of

you poor wounded ones. It is very hard for the preacher to always pick his words to suit all His hearers and, perhaps, someone will come to me, after the service, and say, "Oh, there was something you said that tried me so very much." And, usually, the very people who are most tried by the Word are the very ones that we most want to comfort! Sometimes, a dear soul comes to me and says, "Oh, Sir, I am afraid I am a hypocrite!" I answer, "I never met a hypocrite who was afraid that he was a hypocrite." That could not be, for hypocrites are quite certain that they are *not* hypocrites! And he that is so timid and trembling that he is afraid he may not take these things of which I have been speaking, is the very person whom we must encourage to lay hold of every sweet and precious promise that falls from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ!

May God make this promise true to everyone here who does not yet know Him, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her"! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HOSEA 2:6-23.

Verse 6. *Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.* God will cause sin to be painful. He will make the way of it difficult. He will do everything to prevent the sinner running in it—"She shall not find her paths."

7. *And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them.* They cannot find satisfaction in sinful pleasure. That which once they easily obtained, they shall no longer be able to procure.

7. *And she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.* Am I addressing a backslider? Has God hedged up your way? Is there a whisper in your heart which reminds you of better days and happier times? Oh, stifle not that whisper! Let it be heard within your spirit—if it is but a gentle voice, listen to it till it increases in force and sounds like the very voice of God in your soul! It will be for your present and eternal good if you do so.

8. *For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.* It is a sad sin when we take God's mercies and use them in rebellion against Him. Just think of it—the very gifts which Jehovah gave to these people, they presented in sacrifice to Baal! And there are men who are in comfortable circumstances, who spend their wealth for sin. They have health and strength, and they use them in the service of their own evil passions. The very gifts with which God has enriched them become weights to sink them deeper and deeper in the gulf of transgression. Ah, this is terrible! God has often brought men down to poverty, to sickness, to death's door, in order that they might be weaned from their sin. He saw that they were going to Hell full-handed and He judged it better that they should go to Heaven empty-handed! He knew that if they had health, they would misuse it, so He stretched them on the bed of sickness, that they might turn to Him. God has severe remedies for desperate cases—He will do all that

mercy and wisdom can suggest to prevent men from being their own destroyers.

9-11. *Therefore will I return and take away My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof, and will recover My wool and My flax given to cover her nakedness. And now will I uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of My hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her Sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.* There is no more merriment—the old songs have lost their sweetness and the old games have lost their charm.

12. *And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, of which she has said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me. So I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.* So that the joys of sin shall become miseries, as if vineyards were suddenly trained into dense forests wherein lions and wolves might make their lairs. There are some people who can understand this in a spiritual sense. Some, perhaps, who have been made to realize it in their own experience.

13. *And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot Me, says the LORD.* It is terrible when God comes to visit upon men the days of their sin—when for every night of sin they shall have a night of anguish—when for every pleasure that they took in sin they shall feel the scourge of conscience till they have measured out the weary round. "She went after her lovers, and forgot Me, said the Lord." This was said by Him who never forgot her, by Him whose love was true and faithful to her when she thus went away from Him and defiled herself and dishonored His holy name!

Now read the next verse and be astonished—

14. *Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.* You might have thought the Lord was going to say, "Therefore, behold, I will destroy her!" Nothing of the kind. "I will fascinate her to myself, I will draw her away from all her idol lovers and I will speak comfortably unto her."

15. *And I will give her her vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.* "I will pluck this Israel of Mine out of all her sin. I will give her back the purity and the happiness of her early days. 'She shall sing, there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.'" You must have noticed how often God speaks of that coming out of Egypt. He says, in another place, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness." Here the Lord promises to give back to Israel the joy she had when she was young and espoused herself to her God.

16. *And it shall be at that day, said the LORD, that you shall call Me Ishi; and shall call Me no more Baali.* "You shall call me, my Man, my Husband"—a name of sweet endearment. "and shall call me no more, Baali," that is, "my Lord, my lordly Husband," for the Lord's love shall not be galling to you, but it shall sweetly and gently rule you. Oh, what a sweet change this is, when we no longer tremble before God with slavish

fear, but love Him with intense affection and see in Him our soul's Husband in whom is all our delight!

17. *For I will take away the names of Balaam out of her mouth and they shall no more be remembered by their name.* The word, Baalim, had been profaned—they had applied it to other lords—and when they used it concerning Jehovah, it sounded harsh, as if He, too, was a tyrant master!

18. *And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of the air, and with the creeping things of the ground.* Everything is in covenant with me if I am in covenant with God! There is nothing so high that it can hurt me, there is nothing so low that it can injure me, there is nothing so great that it need distress me, there is nothing so little that it shall torment me!

18. *And I will break the bow and the sword of the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.* Oh, the security of God's people when they get into their right position towards God!

19. *And I will betroth you unto Me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies.* What a glorious promise is this! It is marvelous that our wayward, wanton, wicked souls should be brought back, by infinite mercy, and then that God should be so enamored of us as to declare, "I will betroth you unto Me forever."

20. *I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness: and you shall know the LORD.* It is said three times that He will betroth us unto Himself, as if the Lord knew that we would hardly be able to believe it.

21, 22. *And it shall come to pass in that day, I will answer, said the LORD, will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth; and the earth shall answer with corn, and wine, and the oil and they shall answer Jezreel.* So that there shall be no famine to try God's people! Their prayers shall be abundantly answered and all their needs shall be supplied.

23. *And I will sow her unto Me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not My people, You are My people; and they shall say, You are my God.* Oh, blessed Scripture! May the Lord write it on all our hearts! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—261, 476. 607.

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 11, 1883.

"But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel."
2 Chronicles 28:23.

I HAVE a little to say about the condition of Judah under Ahaz before I come to personal dealing with souls from this text. God had given to His people a very simple mode of worship. He was the invisible and only living God and they were to worship Him in spirit and in truth. There was to be one altar and that was to be at Jerusalem. But all the rest of the world was given up to idolatry and the Israelites were not a very spiritual people, so, by-and-by, they wanted something to see, some image, some symbol. When the 10 tribes broke off from Judah, they set up images of a bull to represent the strength of Deity. Those who kept to the worship of the invisible Jehovah without emblems, ridiculed these symbols, and called the bulls, in contempt, calves. But the calf-worship became very strong throughout Israel and there were many in Judah who were attracted to it. It was the worship of God, but it was the worship of God in a wrong way, for there was a very express Commandment which forbade it—"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: for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me."

There are still many who worship idols and images, but they say, "No, we do not worship them; we worship God through them." Just so, but that is as much forbidden in the Second Commandment as the worship of other gods is forbidden in the First—they are both violations of the Divine Law! When the people of Judah had gone so far as to worship God through images, they went still farther and bowed down to Baal and Ashtaroth. They even bowed down to the sun and even *flies*, for Baal-Zebub, the "God of Flies," became one of their objects of adoration! Associated with this idolatry was everything that was sinful. I do not dare tell you what horrible and loathsome abominations were witnessed in connection with the worship of these gods.

Do not, however, condemn those Jews and Israelites without remembering another story. In this world, in later times, the Son of God set up a pure and undefiled religion in which there was no similitude of God whatever. But, after a while, they who professed to worship Christ felt they needed to have a cross and crucifix, pictures and images. Of course they did not worship the cross, or the crucifix, or the pictures, or the images! No, but they professed to worship Christ by *the help of these things*. That was the first violation of the simplicity of worship and it was, in reality, departing from the living God. In a very short time they took to the worship of saints—and from that they went to the worship of cast clouts and rotten rags until some of us have seen, with our own eyes, bones—supposed to be the bones of saints—decayed teeth and all kinds of rubbish made the subjects of worship when they have been exposed to the gaze of the deluded people! Into such idolatry, by slow degrees, did those fall who professed to call themselves Christians—and only three or four hundred years ago, from one end of this island to the other, the land was full of "holy crucifixes," images, relics and I know not what! The people were utterly given up to idolatry and the Gospel of God was scarcely known!

Then rang out, clear and shrill, the voices of Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin and the like and, after a while, men arose who said, "We will worship none but God—and all these images we utterly abhor." There was, for them, nothing but the prison, the stake and all manner of cruel deaths—but they were steadfast even unto the end! You know how brave Hugh Latimer, as he began to burn at the stake in his old age, cheered up his companion by saying, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man! We shall, this day, light such a candle by God's Grace in England as I trust shall never be put out." And so they did. There came out to die for Christ, poor, humble, illiterate men and women—and some of noble rank! And even bishops could sometimes take their share of the persecution and die until, at last, men began to hate the idols by reason of the cruelty which was used in keeping them up! Then came a revolt against Romanism and all over England men smashed the "holy water" basins, defaced the pictures, pulled down the images and treated them with utter contempt! And England was freed from the idolatry under which she had groaned so long. We thought she would always remain free, but, alas, we only dreamed it. By-and-by there came men in the Established Church who did not bid us worship saints, nor did they, at first, go very far in idolatry, but they said that they must have vestments, incense and I know not what. And now they have boldly set up the crucifix—that calf of Baal, for it is nothing better—that image which they adore and which we loathe because it has become the thin end of the wedge—the first open return to idolatry!

Where is true Protestant feeling in England? It seems to me to be almost extinct! All that many care for is an ornate service—something beautiful for the eyes to rest upon, flowers more abundant than in a conservatory, music sweet to the ear, the scent of incense and thus, by-and-

by—unless God prevents it—we shall get back to the old Roman idolatry and that would be the ruin of this land as it has been the ruin of every land where it has had the sway! Time was when God covered England with His wing, when Spain's Armada was swept away by the tempest, like chaff before the wind, and God was with our country and gave her power and made her to be the empress of the seas. But if she forsakes her God, she will fall from her heights! If this land becomes full of images and idols again—and there are none found to protest against it—the God that lifted us up will throw us down! He that has used us for His Glory will reckon us to be unfit for His service and cast us away with other nations that He has forsaken because of their defilement through idolatry! I will not say more upon this matter, now, but I will pray about it, and I ask every man who feels as I do to continue to pray, lest it should be said of us, concerning these idols, "They were the ruin of him, and of all Israel," for so it must be if we forsake the living God and turn aside unto gods that are not gods!

Now I come to a more practical matter as far as each individual is concerned and, first, I shall want you to notice *the man ruining himself.* Secondly, the *man in ruins.* And, thirdly, *other people ruined with him.*

I. First, look at THE MAN RUINING HIMSELF.

Sin will ruin any man. If it is not forsaken, it will eternally ruin him. Ahaz is the type of those who ruin themselves. I daresay many will at once exclaim, "This description does not belong to us!" Perhaps you suppose it never could belong to you. Listen, I have seen those who swore to live a holy life turn aside to the grossest immorality. Often they have been men who thought they were past temptation and believed it was utterly impossible that they should turn aside. Let us speak of Ahaz and, as we do so, let each man take to heart anything that belongs to himself—and that which does not belong to him, let him pray God to bless to the one to whom it is suitable.

Here, then, was one who, as a king, *began life by determining to be his own master.* He had been told to worship the invisible God with the simple rites of the Law, but he resolved that he would worship what he pleased, where he pleased and how he pleased. He was not to be dictated to! He would select his own gods and worship as many as he pleased. So he did, "but they were the ruin of him." A man may begin life with this resolution—"I am not going to be bound by anybody. I shall do as I like, I shall have my own way. I shall be independent, I am not going to be obedient to God, nor to hearken to what His Book prescribes. I shall have what indulgences I choose." If he does so, those indulgences will be "the ruin of him." That character which has not for its cornerstone, obedience to God, is a character that will tumble down in ruins one day or another! O young man, begin life with this resolve, "I will serve God. I will seek to know His mind and His will, and I will say to all others, 'Whether it is right to obey God rather than man, you judge.'"

This man, Ahaz, was also *very high-handed in his sin.* He even set up rival altars in the Temple itself! Dreadful as it seems, yet he imported an

altar from Damascus and erected it in the place where had stood the altar of God! He went beyond his predecessors in his determination that idolatry should cover all the land—and he persecuted and oppressed the faithful servants of Jehovah. A man may be very high-handed against God and sneeringly ask, with Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" But if he does so, it will be "the ruin of him." Pharaoh did not find the answer. He might continue to provoke Jehovah, but, in the end, when God had killed the first-born of Egypt, the chief of all her strength, he learned that it is perilous for a man to be high-handed with God!

Further, Ahaz also *lavished great treasure upon his sin.* All the wealth he had, he was willing to spend in order that he might have his own way and worship his own gods. Yet, "they were the ruin of him." Perhaps he was ruined all the faster for that very reason. When a man has plenty of money and he lets it run away freely, simply that he may sin against his God and indulge his evil passions, he may seem to flourish for a while, but let no man envy him, for those passions will be "the ruin of him." Though the land is full of silver and gold, though there is no end of the horses and chariots, yet, as the Lord lives, if a man shall use these in fighting against God, they will be "the ruin of him." That is how it will end, sooner or later—and probably sooner!

Ahaz also *defied the chastisement of God.* The Lord punished him by permitting his enemies to invade his country. His people were carried away captive, yet he would not humble himself on account of that. The more he was distressed, the more he sinned. "This is that king Ahaz," and we have seen men whom God has terribly smitten, but they have not yielded to Him. They have even risen from a sick bed more wicked than when they were stretched upon it—breaking their promises, casting their vows to the wind and going back, "like the dog to his own vomit, or the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." They have said that they cared nothing for pain, sickness, illness—they would not turn unto the Lord—and thus their sins were the ruin of them. The blows of God came home to them, at last, and sin slew them, after all!

Yet further, Ahaz *was exceedingly clever.* He said, "I will make a friend of Tilgath-Pilneser, the king of Assyria, and he will protect me. I will put myself in vassalage under him and then the little kings of Syria and Israel will be afraid to touch me, and I shall be left in quiet." Ah, men are sometimes very clever in their sin. At least they think they are! They will not yield to God. They will not become Christians—they are not such fools! They are so sharp, they will do well enough! They have a friend, somewhere. They have a card they have not yet played and a scheme which, when it is revealed, will astonish you! They will do well enough without God—let those who want Him pray to Him. Yet their sins will be the ruin of them, for the clever men shall be taken in their own craftiness and shall be destroyed by the very instruments with which they sought to promote their prosperity—even as this man was, for, when the king of

Assyria came, he plundered the palace of Ahaz and took away his wealth—and did not help him in the least.

Ahaz was also *a man of great taste.* That was one reason why he was an idolater—the worship of God, in a simple manner, did not please him, or gratify his refined taste. He was a cultured and aesthetic individual, so, when he went down to Damascus and saw an idolatrous altar, he said, "That is my idea of an altar! I will have one like it." So the pattern of it was sent off to Jerusalem and Uriah, the priest, made himself very busy in carrying out the king's wishes so that, by the time Ahaz came back, there was his new altar all ready. I can imagine that he said, as he looked at it, "That is the style of altar for me! I want none of your old-fashioned Davidic altars." Yet those fine ideas of his were "the ruin of him." And I am afraid there are a great many persons who will be ruined by their taste—by allowing it to override conscience and suffering, themselves, to be guided by their whims and fancies—and not by the teaching of the Word of God. To me that seems beautiful which God ordains—and that is abominable which God abhors! May it be so with each one of us, but if we allow our own taste to lead us into sin, then we shall find that it will be the ruin of us and of all who do like unto us.

This man—I have not yet completed my portrait of him—had *some to back him who ought to have opposed him.* When his predecessor, Uzziah, went into the Temple to offer incense, the priests withstood him and thrust him out for he had no right there—and leprosy came upon his brow and he hasted to go out. But when Ahaz wanted this new altar, Uriah the priest was quite ready to adapt himself to his lord's ideas. He would, of course, prefer the old-fashioned low church but, still, he was a very broad-minded man and he was willing to have a high church altar set up if his majesty wished it. And when his majesty said so and when he came and offered sacrifices upon it, Uriah did not say a word against it. How could he? It was a State church and, therefore, the king did as he liked! That style of action is often seen in religious and social life. A man does wrong and the Christian minister who ought to speak plainly to him about it, does not dare to do so! Perhaps the minister, who ought to be faithful for his Master's sake, thinks that, for the sake of peace, he had better not interfere and so he does not. Then the guilty man says, "It does not matter what I do, I have a priest at the back of me, I shall be all right." Yet his sins are "the ruin of him" for all that. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished."

This man, Ahaz, had another thought within his mind, namely, that he *would imitate prosperous sinners.* "Look," he said, "at the king of Syria. Look how he prospers! I will worship his gods and then I shall prosper, too." "But they were the ruin of him." That is where the emphasis of the text comes in. I have known a man say in deeds, if not in words, "I know what I will do. I have no trust in God nor in His Providence, but there is So-and-So who has a very clever way of making money, I shall do as he does." Oh, the many who have found that this mode of action has been the ruin of them—when they have broken loose

from the bonds of integrity and righteousness—and have begun to play fast and loose with honesty and truth! Take heed, dear Friends, not to imitate the prosperous sinner, for if you do, you may be sure that following his plans will be the ruin of you! Envy not the man who gets rich by that which is not straightforward, for he must come to an evil end.

It was so with Ahaz, for *he abandoned the worship of God altogether.* He broke up the holy vessels of God's House, put out all the lamps which had burned perpetually and shut up the doors of the House of the Lord. This is the case, nowadays, with men who say that they have done with religion. Nobody in their house goes to a place of worship. They have no Bibles to bother them, they care nothing about the Sabbath. As for themselves, they never darken the doors of any House of Prayer—you never see them there, any more, and they say, "We have got rid of this, and of that, which used to be our custom." But such conduct is the ruin of them! A man may harden himself until he becomes like the nether millstone, his conscience may seem to be suffocated and the last spark of goodness to be extinct within him—but he cannot, for all that, evade the impending doom—for his sins will be "the ruin of him." It is hard work to have to speak thus, but there are some who must have this stern Truth of God spoken to them, lest they should die in their sins.

II. Secondly, and very briefly, I want you to look AT THE MAN IN RUINS.

You say, perhaps, that you will never be in that state. You are not converted, but you are honest, upright and truthful. Well, we shall see, or, at all events, *God* will see! I have beheld a man in ruins who once seemed a Christian. He came in and out among his brethren and they esteemed him. But he was living secretly in a defiled life. He was unchaste and that worm gnawed and gnawed, until, at last, his household was forsaken, domestic comfort was gone—and at this moment I scarcely know where he is. And no one wishes to know, for he has become so abandoned and so foul that those who once knew him can only sigh as they remember him.

I have known others of this sort. They were apparently doing well. They were admirable and excellent. They were the delight of every company in which they entered, but they took the intoxicating cup, a little, and then a little more, and then secret drinking became visible by certain tokens upon the face and, by-and-by, business was neglected, other things were not attended to and now the man may be known by his very clothing—if he is not in rags, he is near to it—his character is gone, for he is a confirmed drunk. He must acknowledge it—he cannot truthfully deny it. That is another kind of ruin. I have also seen a young Christian man apparently begin to go into bad company and join with those who were merry fellows. It is true they scoffed at religion a little, but he winked at that, for he enjoyed their society. They flattered him and now he has become just as bad as they are! Instead of being shocked at infidel sentiments, he is the first to vent them—a very ringleader in taking the chair of the scoffer—and sitting there a ruined man!

I have seen men ruined as to their peace. They once seemed bright and happy, but they are not so now—their laughter is but a mimic joy. They have sinned, they have turned aside from God and their peace is marred. In some, their character is ruined. Those who know them cannot trust them, so their prospects are ruined. They went aside, little by little, and, whereas we hoped they would have been useful and honorable men, they are the very reverse—they are like drowning men—they are, themselves, sinking—and they are pulling down others with them! Worst of all, their soul is ruined and, unless infinite mercy shall prevent it, they are ruined for eternity, ruined past all hope save that one grand hope—the door of which stands open even to the dying sinner—faith in Jesus Christ! But as yet they are ruined, utterly ruined, though once they seemed to bid as fair for goodness as any man in the world!

Whenever I see a ruin, I cannot help thinking of what it used to be. Can you? Here once sat knights at their tables, while the minstrel poured forth sweetest song. Now, all is a desolation! So, in that man was once everything that was hopeful—you would have been glad to go to the House of God in company with him. Look at him now—the victim of every passion, a waif and stray upon the great ocean of vice!

When you look at a ruin, you cannot help thinking what it might yet be. It was once a famous Church where the praises of God rang out both morning and evening. It might be so, still, but the roof is gone, the walls are tottering and the windows let in the cold blasts. So, I see a man who once seemed to praise God, but he is a ruin. His sins have been "the ruin of him." What do you often find in a ruin? Go there at night and hear the owl hooting to his fellow. Go by day and see all manner of loathsome creatures finding harbor there. So, go to the ruined man, the man who once promised as well as any man among us, but who departed from God and gave way to sin and, little by little, went further and further from the paths of rightness. Think of him with sorrow. He has lost his opportunity—think what he might have been. Ah, and think what he is now through his sins. "They were the ruin of him."

If I had the time, I would like to indicate many things, perhaps to men here, that will be the ruin of them. But if there is one here who has begun to get away from God, who thinks that he can do without God, I implore him to stop before he goes further, for sin will be "the ruin of him!" There never was a man yet who made a good bargain with sin. There is not one man, now in eternity, whose course in this life is finished, who, when he takes his tablet to reckon up the result of a sinful life, can say that he was the gainer by it. What if it made him a king, if he waded through sin to a throne? What are his gains today? What if he grew rich—where is his wealth now? That solemn question of our Lord he can sorrowfully answer for himself—"What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Oh, that God the blessed Spirit would send these warnings home to some who are beginning to trifle with sin, lest it should be the ruin of them!

III. I have one more point to dwell upon. Not only was there a man in ruins, but there were *others that were ruined with him,* for the text says, "They were the ruin of him, *and of all Israel."*

Ahaz ruined all Israel as well as himself! This man did not perish alone in his iniquity! My Friends, if you perish in your sin, you will not perish alone. That is one of the most terrible things about evil. If I have preached to you, during my ministry here, false doctrines and that which is not God's Word, there are many here who must perish with me. But then my lot would be more horrible than that of any one among you if I have misled you and if I have not been faithful. It will be an awful thing for a man who has occupied a pulpit and yet has not preached the Gospel, to go before the bar of God and have to answer for the souls committed to him! That ancient message still needs to be heard—"If the watchman sees the sword come and blows not the trumpet, and the people are not warned. If the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand." This it is that makes our work so weighty that our knees, sometimes, knock together when we are thinking of going up to our pulpit again! It is no child's play, Sirs, if there is to be a judgment and we are to answer for our faithfulness or unfaithfulness! What must be our account if we are not true to God and to man?

"Don't speak so sharply," says one. "You are very dogmatic, Sir," says another. I know what is said, but what is that, compared with clearing my conscience so that I may stand up in the light of the Last Great Day an honest man? I have prayed many a time that I might be able, at the end of my ministry, to say what George Fox, the Quaker, said when he was dying, "I am clear, I am clear!" If we have been faithful in our testimony. If we have said what we felt and have not hesitated to speak out for fear of sinful men—and if we have never tried to put velvet on our lips, that we might restrain the Spirit's course within us—to earn the approval of some few persons of taste—it will be well with us in the Great Day of Account!

"Well," says someone, "I am not a minister." No, perhaps you are not. But are you a father? Suppose your boy perishes through your iniquity, what will you say to that? One day I heard a man, who was given to drink, say to his son, "Open your shoulders, boy, and take it in like a man! I want you to drink like your father." Who but his father made that boy a drunk? There was a father who dropped an oath. Do I mean you, you ask? Yes, if you are here tonight. When your boy took to cursing and swearing, you did not like it—but who taught him to swear? Are there not many men who will be the ruin of their children's souls? And are there not mothers, in a different rank of life, who train their daughters for gaiety and frivolity, who will have to answer for the ruin of their souls? Do you not think that there are people who would like to be thought respectable, who are planning to bring up their children to be victims to sin? They know they are not putting them where they are likely

to come under good influences, but where, according to the order of nature, they will be led away from Christ and from the service of God!

O Sirs, we all have vastly more influence than we reckon upon! The working man in the shop thinks that he is the victim of his companions' bad example, but, if he had more backbone, he might be the master and leader of them! Now he follows suit and goes in the swim. But if he were to be converted, how many he might influence for good! I thank God that when men are really turned by His Grace, those who have been the worst usually become the best! Did you not hear me speak, just now, of grand old Hugh Latimer, who burned so bravely for the faith? Yet he was, before his conversion, one of the most thoroughgoing Papists in the world—and was so violent that he would have put to death every heretic that he got hold of! But when the Grace of God arrested him, he became just as earnest for the Gospel of Jesus Christ as he had been earnest against it! If sin will be the ruin of men—and surely it will—yet our Lord Jesus Christ knows how to take ruined sinners and build them up to be temples for His indwelling! Christ will take the very castaways of the devil and use them for Himself. He delights to stoop over the dunghill and pick up a broken vessel that is thrown away and make it into a vessel meet for the Master's use!

Do we not sometimes sing to His praise that He has taken us from the dunghill and made us to sit amongst princes, even the princes of His people? Turn unto God, then, you wanderers! Turn unto Christ! It may be so with you! Look to the bleeding wounds of the great Redeemer! May His Spirit help you to do so at this very hour and, looking, you shall live! And then your sins shall not be the ruin of you, but the Repairer of these ruins shall come to build you up into a temple for His praise! The Lord bless these feeble words, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CHRONICLES 28:1-5, 16-27; ISAIAH 2:6-22.

2 Chronicles 28:1. *Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.* So that he died before he reached the prime of life—he was cut off by God in the very midst of his sin.

1, 2. *But he did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father: for he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel.* They had set up the worship of God under emblems. There were the calves of Bethel, the representation of strength—it was the worship of God by imagery and Ahaz imitated it—and went even further in sin.

2. *And made also molten images for Baalim.* If we worship the true God under some symbol, the next step is to worship a false god.

3. *Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.* The worship of Moloch was one of the most horrible that can be imagined. A bronze image was

made terribly hot and then children were thrust into its burning arms to be consumed. And this king went to such a length that he gave his own children to death in that cruel fashion in the place commonly called by the Jews, Topheth, or the Place of Spitting, since it was so loathsome to them to think of this false god.

4. *He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.* According to the command of God, there was to be but one altar and that one was to be at Jerusalem. But these people multiplied their altars—there could not be a high place but they must have an idol shrine set up upon it.

5. ***T****herefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.* He received blow upon blow—God would not let him rest in his sin. Now turn to verse sixteen.

16. *At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him.* The king of Assyria was the greatest potentate in that region—all the little kings were afraid of him and Ahaz, therefore, sent to him for help when they were in trouble. Ahaz made no appeal to God for the assistance he required—he turned to the arm of flesh.

17. *For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah and carried away captives.* The Edomites had been under subjection to Judah, but now that God had left her, Judah could not hold her position.

18. *The Philistines also.* A people that one might have thought had become extinct, so weak were they that we scarcely hear of them, yet, "the Philistines also"—

18-20. *Had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Beth-Shemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo, also, and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there. For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz, king of Israel; for he made Judah naked and transgressed sorely against the LORD. And Tilgath-Pilneser king of Assyria came unto him and distressed him, but strengthened him not.* How vain it is to seek relief apart from God!

21, 22. *For Ahaz took away a portion out of the House of the LORD, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not. And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz.* A black mark is put against his name, to show how greatly guilty he was. Those who rebel against Divine checks and will not be held in by the Providence of God are to be written down in capital letters as great sinners. They sin with emphasis who sin against the chastising rod!

23-25. *For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel. And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the House*

of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the House of God, and shut up the doors of the House of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. And in every single city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers. He set up little shrines so that every passerby might worship which idol he pleased—and each man might present a little incense—thus the whole city was filled with idolatry.

26, 27. *Now the rest of his acts and of all his ways, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem; but they brought him not into the sepulchers of the kings of Israel.* There was a holy and reverent feeling among the remnant of God's people that a man who had lived as Ahaz had done should not lie with the good kings of Israel.

27. *And Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.* Now turn to Isaiah, the second chapter, and the sixth verse.

Isaiah 2:6. *Therefore You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, because they are replenished from the east and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they are pleased with the children of strangers.* It was God's command that they should keep themselves separate and worship only Him, but, in the reign of this man Ahaz, they began to practice all the foul arts of the nations round about them. They had "soothsayers like the Philistines"—men who pretended to divine future events from the flights of birds, or from the entrails of victims—and a thousand other things. They went into witchcraft and the unhallowed arts of the heathen.

7-9. *Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots: their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: and the mean man bows down, and the great man humbles himself: therefore forgive them not.* The poor men worshipped these idols and the rich did the same. All over the country the people were bowing before some symbol or other instead of worshipping the unseen God in spirit and in truth. Therefore the Prophet foretold that something terrible would happen to them.

10-16. *Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of Hosts shall be upon everyone that is proud and lofty, and upon everyone that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.* These people were wealthy through the natural riches of their land and through commerce with other nations. They were skilled in the arts, according to the fashion of the times, but

now God declares that because they were proud, all their treasures would be destroyed and the things wherein they boasted should be taken away from them.

17, 18. *And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols He shall utterly abolish.* They set them up at every street corner, they even put them before the House of God, itself. On every green hill and in every grove, they worshipped with filthy rites that can scarcely be thought of without a blush! But God declared that He would sweep them all away and so He did when He visited the land in His fierce anger.

19-22. *And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made, each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake terribly the earth. Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for of what account is he?* Can you imagine Isaiah delivering this stern, but noble message—gorgeous in language, poetic and sublime to the very last degree? What courage it must have taken for him to stand forth and deliver this before an idolatrous king and a people who went greedily after him! Verily, the Lord has raised up His faithful servants in all times, and He gives them the courage of lions and voices that are very terrible! Yet the hearts of men are seldom moved. "Cease you," says Isaiah, "cease you from man"—from the king of Assyria—from all powers in which you trust! "Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for of what account is he?"

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—471, 473, 526.

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

A TEST FOR TRUE SEEKERS
NO. 2566

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 17, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 15, 1883.

"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it."
Jeremiah 50:5.

This prophecy of Jeremiah was concerning the destruction of Babylon. Israel and Judah had been carried away into captivity by the domineering power. The captives lived far away in Babylon and wept when they remembered Zion. The Prophet foretells that in the day when God should break the power of Babylon and cast down all their false gods, then should come the time when the captives should return to their own land. That seems a very simple observation, but it is full of comfort when we remember its symbolic meaning. By nature, all are captives under the power of Satan, sin and death. That is the great Babylon that has carried captive even the elect of God! And there are multitudes, redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, who are still in bondage under the powers of darkness. Now, just as Israel found comfort and hope, and had an expectation of getting back to the promised land when the might of Babylon was broken, so there is comfort for every sinner who desires to escape from the power of sin and Satan in this great fact—that Christ has broken the power of the old dragon. They met in deadly combat. All the hosts of Hell were mustered in that dark and dreadful hour when our lone Champion, whom God had anointed that He might fight our battles, met the whole of them and overthrew them! They bruised His heel, for He left His body bleeding on the Cross, but He broke the head of the arch-enemy. As He cried, "It is finished," He dashed to pieces the powers that were arrayed against Him—and Babylon was then and there overthrown! Here is our hope.

Listen, you who are in the fetters of Satan, you may yet overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, for the Lamb Himself has overcome him and all who trust in His great Sacrifice shall come off more than conquerors! He has led captivity captive! He is the master of the situation and His adversaries He has utterly overthrown. *His* adversaries, I said, but they are also *your* adversaries—therefore let every sinner who desires to escape from the bondage of Satan, take heart of hope from the good news that in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, Jehovah has triumphed over our great enemy! He has snapped in two the iron yoke, that His redeemed might go free! Thus, Babylon's destruction is Israel's salvation.

Notice, next, these words in the fourth verse—"In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together"—from which I gather that when men's hearts are set upon seeking the Lord, it is wonderful how neighborly they become! You know that the children of Israel and the children of Judah had separated from one another. They each had a king and they were frequently at war. They envied one another, though they ought to have been brethren. But now, when God begins to deal with them and they start back to seek their God, they become friends with one another! Well may we forget our enmities against men when we begin to repent of our enmities against God! It is time for a man to forgive his brother his trespasses when he, himself, prays to the Lord, "Forgive me my trespasses." And this must be done! It will be a very great hindrance to any seeker if he tries to find the Lord and yet, in his heart, harbors enmity against anyone who has offended him. I believe that there are many persons who long to find peace with God, who never will unless they first make peace with their fellow men. Remember our Lord's words—"If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you; leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

Will you go and ask the great King to forgive you the enormous debt that you owe Him when you are about to seize your brother by the throat because of the few pence he owes you? Then, surely you cannot think that God will listen to such a suppliant as you are! No, but when God brings people together to Himself, it is astonishing how close they come to one another! Israel and Judah will then be praying and weeping together—and seeking the same Lord. How often this has happened in times of revival! A man has stood up to be prayed for and he has been astonished to find that there was a Brother with whom he had quarreled, months before, who was pleading for mercy at the same time! Neighbors who have fallen out with one another, have come to the Tabernacle and found the Savior, together—and have been good friends ever since—for the God who reconciles us to Himself is sure to make us friendly with one another! Attend to this hint, then, you who are seeking the Savior! You who are encouraged by the fact that the power of Satan is broken, take care that you make up all quarrels and put an end to all envying and disputes, for thus you will be helped in seeking the Lord.

Notice, next, that the right way for a sinner to return is first to seek the Lord and then to seek Zion—that is, the Church, or Heaven, whichever you understand Zion to be. Verse four says, "They shall go and seek the Lord their God." And then follows our text, "They shall ask the way to Zion." John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* shows the way to Heaven, but we ought always to remember that he was not writing to show *sinners* the way to *Christ*, but to show the way to *Heaven*. Those are two different things though, in some respects, they are similar, yet there is a difference between them. The way to Christ is this—"Believe and live." The way to Heaven is, *first*, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," and then, after that, by His Grace, follow on to know the Lord and go from strength to

strength, from Grace to Grace, till, at last, you are prepared for the eternal happiness. There is a difference between seeking Christ and seeking Christ's people that should always be noticed—you are not to seek Christ's people so as to join with them until you have, first of all, found Christ! No man, no woman, no child, has any right to Gospel ordinances till first of all he has trusted Christ. When you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, then Christ is yours and you are saved! *Then* come and join with the Church militant, below, and you shall, in due time, join with the Church triumphant above! But remember that the first business of a sinner is not to seek Heaven, nor to join a church, but to seek the Lord. You have to be reconciled to the God who made you—you have to experience the power of the God who alone can re-create you and make you a new creature in Christ Jesus—you have to seek the Lord.

"But," says one, "God is a consuming fire." I know He is. Therefore, come to Him that everything in you that can be consumed, may be consumed, and that God may give you an inconsumable life which shall dwell even in the midst of the fire and not be consumed! There is no Heaven apart from God, there is no peace of conscience apart from God, there is no purification from sin apart from God. The Lord still says, "Seek you My face." But many make a mistake and go trooping off to join some Christian people. No, no! Come back—you cannot go to God that way! First, give yourselves to the Lord and then afterwards, "unto us by the will of God." You must first be joined to the Head, then to the members! First to Christ, then to His Church. Take all things in the right order—begin and go on as God would have you do. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Let that also be treasured up in your memory, if you are seeking the Lord.

Another remark arising from the context is this, that many who seek the Lord seek him weeping. "The children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping." Notice that combination, "going and weeping." Some are weeping, but never going—and some are going, but never weeping. It is a blessed thing when we have the two together—practically drawing near to God and passively feeling deep sorrow for sin. There are two kinds of tears and I think that they who truly seek the Lord shed both of them—the one is a tear of sorrow because of sin, the other is a tear of joy because of pardon. I would like to have my eyes full of both, that with my joy for pardoned sin I might mourn that I pierced the Lord, grieving that I transgressed God's Law, yet rejoicing that I am forgiven! May you, dear Friends, have these tears standing in your eyes! They never blind the eyes—they are like a bright magnifying glass through which we can more clearly see the mercy of God.

Are any of you beginning to turn to the Lord and do you feel more sad than you ever did before? Well, if so, I am not sorry for you—that is the way that many go to Christ —"going and weeping." The old Puritans used to say that "the way to Heaven is by Weeping-Cross"—by which they meant that repentance is necessary to salvation—and so it is! He who has never sorrowed for sin has never rejoiced in a Savior! And the more you rejoice in Christ, the more you will sorrow for sin. Perhaps the last

repentance of a good man is the deepest that he ever feels. I mean that he will hate sin more when he stands at the gates of Heaven than he did when he first of all saw the way to pardon through the Atoning Sacrifice. Repentance is not a thing to be once manifested and then to be done with forever—repentance and faith go hand in hand all the way to Heaven! Good old Rowland Hill said there was only one thing about Heaven that he regretted and that was that he would not be able to shed the tears of repentance there, for God will wipe all tears from all faces there. But till we get to Heaven, at any rate, let us always be repenting of sin, always lamenting that we ever plunged into it and, at the same time, be always rejoicing that our sins are forgiven!—

"My* sins, *my sins, my Savior!
How sad on You they fall,
Seen through Your gentle patience,
I tenfold feel them all.
I know they are forgiven,
But still their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on Thee."

Now, with all this by way of preliminary, though indeed it is part of the sermon, I come to that portion of Scripture which really forms my text—"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it." This passage may be used as a test by which to try true seekers. I will introduce to you four or five sorts of seekers and also some who are not seekers at all.

I. First, there are some PERSONS WHO NEITHER ASK THE WAY TO ZION NOR SET THEIR FACES TOWARD IT.

There may be some such persons to whom I am now speaking. *Their relationship to Christ is that of utter indifference.* There are millions around us in this sad condition. They are not active opponents—they do not think enough on the things of Christ even to take that position. They regard eternal things as though they were mere trifles and they look upon temporal things as though these were all-important. They call this, "minding the main chance," and, "looking after the principal thing." But as to their souls, God, Heaven and eternity, they are utterly indifferent.

Let us think, just for a minute or two, of *what it is to which they are indifferent.* They are utterly indifferent to God. He made them and yet they never think of what they owe to their Creator. Every minute that they live, the breath in their nostrils is His gift, yet they make Him no return—He is not at all in their thoughts. You know how many there are who live as if there were no God at all. This is a terrible thing because God will require all this at their hands. As surely as they live, if they break His laws, they will be punished. If they neglect His great salvation, He will visit it upon them. He knows all their indifference and He is grieved about it all. Hear how He, Himself, puts it—"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." It is no slight thing to be utterly indifferent to Christ, to Him who loved mankind so much that He could not abide in Heaven and

let them perish, but, must come here and be a lowly, suffering, despised, crucified Man, that He might redeem men. Yet, after all that He has done, which must have astonished the angels in Heaven and which ravishes the heart of every gracious man on earth, these people do not care—

"Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?
Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?"

And they are also utterly indifferent with regard to themselves. They expect to have troubles in this life; but as to that which comforts many of us under these troubles, they do not wish to know about it. They see many of God's people calm and quiet under pain and bereavement and sorrow—and they are sometimes curious to know what the secret is—yet their curiosity is not strong enough to stir them from indifference. Many never cross the threshold of the house where Christ is preached. Some of your neighbors know, by the sound of the bells, that it is the Sabbath, but that is all the Sabbath there is for them. Oh, this is indeed sad! It ought to weigh heavily on every tender heart that there should be multitudes who neither ask their way to Zion nor turn their faces toward it. Alas, that they are indifferent to their own eternal state! They know that they will die—it is very rarely that you meet with a man who will question that—and some of them believe that when they die, there is another state and there will be a final judgment and a giving in of an account before the last tribunal! Yet, for all that, they go on from day to day "like dumb driven cattle." As the ox goes to the slaughter and as the lamb goes to the shambles, so do these people descend into their graves without anxiety and without thought.

Alas, they will not think of that awakening which is as certain as death itself, of that rising again which is an undoubted fact and of that dread appearing before the burning Throne of God where eyes of fire shall read their hearts and where the tongue of thunder shall proclaim their deeds recorded in God's Book of Remembrance. Oh, no, they have no care for all this, it is all a trifle to them! And there are many such. Pity them, dear Friends, and pray for them—and do it all the more because "such were some of you." I saw, yesterday, many working men who, I believe, have really trusted in Christ, and I was charmed by the way in which they were brought to the Savior by their fellow workmen. But some of them, who were at least 40 years of age, told me that they never remembered praying or having a religious thought at all till the Lord met with them. And He that can meet with some can meet with others, too, so let it be our prayer that He will do so to the praise of the glory of His Grace!

Often, when a man is indifferent about Divine things, *it is because he vainly imagines that he is wise.* I do not think that you and I ought to meddle with everything. There are some things we may as well let drift, but this will never do about God and eternity! I may be indifferent to God, but He is not indifferent to me. I may forget Him, but He has not forgotten what I do, think and say. As surely as I live, I shall have to stand before His judgment bar. I may despise Christ, but I shall have to

see Him sitting on the Great White Throne. And if I will not have Him as my Savior, then I must appear before Him as my *Judge*—so that my indifference is vain!

Another thought that ought to come home to many is that *this indifference is so foolish.* When a man is indifferent to his own happiness, then he is a fool! If a man were sick and there were some medicine that would heal him, but he was indifferent to it, you would be very grieved for him, but you would say that he was most foolish. If a man were miserably poor, although he might be rich, but he was indifferent about it, you would think him insane. Now, there is no joy like the joy of salvation in Christ! There is no bliss under Heaven that can parallel the bliss of the man who has committed himself into Christ's hands and is resting calmly in Him! Yet these indifferent people do not care about it. Poor souls, they do not know the value of Christ. Well said the poet—

"His worth, if all the nations knew,
Surely the whole world would love Him, too."

And if they knew the pleasure of religion, they would want to enjoy it. They say that we are a set of long-faced, miserable, melancholy folk. I do not think we look so! Do we? At any rate, we do not feel so—

"The men of Grace have found
Glory begun below."

Ours is a singing religion, ours is a joyful faith that helps us to surmount the trials of each passing hour. Oh, that men would not be indifferent to this, but would begin to ask their way to Zion with their faces toward it!

II. Now, secondly, there is another set of people who ASK THE WAY TO ZION WITH THEIR FACES TURNED AWAY FROM IT.

We meet them, every now and then—some of them come here—their faces are turned away from God, but they have a pew here and they like to hear about the Gospel. I cannot make some people out—they take the trouble to go out on the Sabbath to hear about the way to Heaven, yet they deliberately walk in the opposite direction! I never dare say again what I did once, that I almost wished that some who had heard the Gospel for a number of years and never accepted it, would stay away if they did not mean to have it—that they might make room for somebody else who would receive it. I have always been sorry that I said that, for there is one who has stayed away ever since—and for whose conversion I have often prayed—but he said there was commonsense in my remark and as he did not intend to have salvation, he would come no more to hear of it. And he never has, so far as I know. I sometimes hope that the very honesty of the man may yet compel him to think—he has a love to this place and to me, though he does not come—and I pray God that even that which seemed so sad a result of what I said may turn out for good in the end. But I will not say it again.

Still, it is a very strange thing that any should say, "Tell us the way to Heaven," and yet, when we have told them, that they should set off walking the other way! "Go due east," you say. But they go due west, directly. Now what can be the reason for that? A man is secretly a drunk, or he is unchaste, or a woman is living in secret sin, yet always found listening to the Gospel. Why is this? *Do you wish to increase your own condemnation?*

Do you deliberately intend that the Gospel, which you will not permit to be a savor of life unto life to you, shall be a savor of death unto death to you? Do you really choose that? I cannot think that it is so!

I hope that you do not come *in order that you may hear of things to quarrel with and quibble over.* You do not ask your way to Zion that you may find fault with the way, or pick holes in the reply of him who tries to answer your enquiry—may that be far from you! Yet there have been some, no doubt, who have been guilty of that sin. Still, let me say, even if you come to hear a sermon to ridicule it, come and hear it! I remember one who was, afterwards, an eminent saint, who first went to hear Mr. Whitefield because he was a great mimic. He wanted to hear him so he could later mimic him in a club which they called the "Hell Fire Club." "Now, my mates," he said, "I am going to give you a sermon that I heard Mr. Whitefield preach yesterday." And the man repeated the sermon, but he, himself, was converted while he preached it—and so were several of his mates who had met for blasphemy! So, come even if you come for such an evil purpose as that! Still, it is a sorrowful business that there should be men who ask the way to Zion and turn their faces in the opposite direction. Turn them, O God, and they shall be turned!

III. There is a third class of people WHO ASK THE WAY TO ZION, BUT TURN NOT THEIR FACES.

They are not opposed to religion, yet their faces are not turned towards it. I do not understand them—they are always wanting to know how they can be saved and to know all about salvation, but they do not seem to wish to have it—their faces are not set that way.

What is the meaning of their conduct? *Is it an idle curiosity?* Do they want to understand theology as others wish to understand astronomy or botany? That is almost like drinking wine from the sacred vessels, as Belshazzar did—and you know how that night he was slain. When men who have no part nor lot in this matter are discussing this doctrine and that, it is as if those who are not God's children were playing with the children's bread, or pulling it in pieces.

Why do such people ask about salvation? *Do they dream that mere knowledge will save them?* Do I address one here who imagines that an orthodox creed will save him? Alas, I suppose that no one is more orthodox than the devil, yet no one is more surely lost than he! You may get a clear head, but if you have not a clean heart, it will not avail you at the last. You may know the Westminster Assembly's Catechism by heart and you may heartily denounce all who err from that statement of sound doctrine. But unless you are born again, it will not benefit you. Did you say that you believed the 39 Articles? There is one article that is essential—"You must be born again"—and woe to that man who has not passed through that all-important change!

Perhaps, however, some of those who are asking their way to Zion, but have not set their faces that way, are *asking with a* view *to quiet their consciences.* It makes them feel better to hear a sermon. Oh, you are strange people! There is a man who is very hungry—does it make him feel that his appetite is appeased when he smells the dinner, when he

sees the plates arranged upon the table and hears the clatter of the knives? Do you think that if you are very poor, you will get rich by being allowed to walk through the Bank of England and see the great quantities of bullion there? It is strange that you should imagine this, for it might rather increase, than diminish, your sense of poverty to know that there is so much wealth while you are not a partaker of it.

Is it that you are trying to store up some little knowledge to use, by-and-by? Are you asking the way to Zion that you may run in it when it becomes convenient to you? Ah, Sir, are you making a convenience of God? Do you intend to make Him stand by while you attend to more important things? What is it that is to come before God? I knew a man who was religiously inclined in many respects, but there was a harlot who stood before God. I knew another who had many serious thoughts about God, but in his case it was the wine cup and the companionship of certain friends that stood before God. Ah, how many things there are that are earthly, sensual, devilish—yet men say that God must wait till they have served their turn with these things! Sirs, He will not turn lackey to you! And it may come to this as it did with Felix—that you will never have a convenient time for God—and God will never find a convenient time for you! Oh, let it not be so! If you ask the way to Heaven, let it be with your faces toward it.

IV. There is a fourth set of people WHO HAVE THEIR FACES TOWARD IT, BUT THEY DO NOT ASK THE WAY.

There are not so many, perhaps, in this class as in those I have been describing, but there are some of them. They are resolved to be saved. They are anxious to find Christ. They are willing to join the Church. They are, above all, longing to get to Heaven—but they do not ask the way. *Do they fancy that there are many ways?* How many roads are there to Heaven? This Book declares that there is only one! It says, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." And Jesus Himself says, "I am the way." Not, "I am one of the ways," but, "I am *THE* way." I quoted to you, just now, one of His last sayings—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Well, suppose that he does not believe, what then? "He that believes not shall be damned." Thus, you see, the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ is intolerant of all compromise! It will not admit that there may be other ways to Heaven and other methods of salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." There are some people who, if they happen to be born of parents who believe the Gospel, will follow their father and mother in the good way. But if they happen to be born of ungodly parents, they imitate them. If my father were blind, I do not see any reason why I should put my eyes out. And if any of you happen to have an extremely poor fathers, do you, therefore, say, "Well, I shall never try to rise above his condition. I shall be just as poor as he was and feel a pleasure in being so"? Surely you do not talk like that! Then why should you follow your parents in sinning against God? If the father is wrong,

there is the more reason why the child should be earnest to be right! There have been enough in your family who have been lost—why should not you be the first to be saved, if there have been no others? Think about this important matter. Enquire the way to Zion.

Do you ask, "Where are we to enquire?" Well, first of all, *enquire of the Book*—

"This is the judge that ends the strife,
Where wit and reason fail,
Our guide to everlasting life
Through all this gloomy vale."

When you have enquired of the Book, then go on your knees and *enquire of the blessed Spirit* who inspired the Book! If you cannot understand the Bible, ask the Author of it to explain it to you. He gives wisdom, therefore ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. Ask the *Lord Jesus Christ to* manifest Himself unto you as He does not unto the world, and to lead you in His way. I may also say, but quite secondarily, *enquire of His servants.* Go and hear the Gospel! Do not go where there is fine preaching and clever preaching—unless it is true Gospel preaching. The people of this land have had to get Acts of Parliament passed to prevent the sale of adulterated goods—and in London people try to buy milk that has at least *some* milk in it—yet they will go into a place of worship and say, "There is a clever preacher here." Yes, but is it the Gospel that he preaches? "Oh, they have a very fine organ!" But is the Gospel fully proclaimed there? "You can see all the colors of the rainbow on the backs of the fellows who perform at the altar." Yes, but is the Gospel preached there? That is the one point on which everything depends—all the rest is of little account. They may try to sell us what they like, but if it is not the genuine article, we will not buy it—if it is not the Gospel, what do we want with it? We want that which will really save us in time and through eternity, so we ask for it of those who preach *the Gospel,* and who preach *nothing but the Gospel.*

And I may also add that you will do well to *ask about the way from many of God's people.* Although they do not preach, they will be glad to tell you what they know, and many godly men and women can explain to you just what you need to know. I like to see men, when they are in earnest, seeking out some Christian friend and saying, "Tell me, now, how did you find Christ?" It is good for a young woman to go to the teacher of her class, or to some matronly Christian, and say to her, "Let me tell you of my doubts, dear Sister. You have gone a good way on the heavenly road—tell me how I can get into it." It is a good thing, thus, to enquire of those who are in the road. You may often get your mistakes rectified in this way and, before you have wandered very far, you may be guided into the right road.

V. Now to close. Those are the best enquirers WHO TURN THEIR FACES TOWARD ZION AND YET ARE WILLING TO ASK THE WAY.

Is that *your* condition, dear Friend? Have you set your face towards Christ, towards holiness and towards Heaven, and are you asking the way? Well, then, let me say two or three things for your encouragement.

the first is, *Thank God that your face is toward it and that you are asking the way—*

"My seeking His face
***Is all of His* Grace,"**

said one. And so it is. Thank God for the Grace that has made you feel uneasy in sinning, for the Grace that has made you wish for Grace, for the Grace that has made you long to be a Christian! Set a high value on this little Grace, for it is no small thing, after all, and, as you think of it, bless God for it!

Remember, next, that *you must act as far as you know how to act.* If the Lord has shown you the right pathway, go in that pathway. Perhaps you say, "There are many difficulties there." Never mind the difficulties—cross each bridge as you come to it. "Oh, but there are some things that I do not understand!" No doubt there are! And there are many things that I do not understand. And there are some things that I do not particularly want to understand! If I understand what really concerns my eternal welfare and the good of my fellow men, and the glory of God, it is enough for me. As far as I have gone at present, I can say, with Jack the huckster—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All in All."

That map of the road has lasted me so far and I would advise you to keep to it, at least for the present. "But I want to know all about the Doctrine of Election and so on." Do you? Well, you shall know, one of these days, but just now, you need not think so much of that glorious Truth of God as the Doctrine that God has sent His Son into the world that men might live through Him! You keep to that line of Truth at present. You have your face turned toward Zion, then go straight on! You have asked the way and you have learned enough to know that Christ is the way—then let Him be the way for you. And if there is anything else to be learned—and there is—God shall reveal even this to you.

Of some of the grand Doctrines of the Gospel our Lord might say to you as He said to His disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now." You shall bear them, by-and-by. When your little boy gets his first spelling book, does he begin to whimper and say, "I can't learn A B C, Mother, because my brother Harry learns Greek, and I must learn Greek first"? You say, "My dear John, learn your A B C now, and you shall get to Greek by-and- by if it is necessary." So, dear Friend, you just keep to such texts as these—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." If you are now asking the way to Zion with your face toward it, remember that the Lord has made the way very plain. He knew that limping feet would travel over it, so He gathered out the stones. He knew what dim eyes some of the travelers in it would have, so He lit it up with many a bright lamp and He, Himself, is still the Light of it!

He knew what a heavy burden you would bear until you began to tread that narrow way, so He had an open sepulcher set close by the Cross, that everyone who looks to Him on that Cross might feel his burden roll off his back, to be buried in that sepulcher never to be found again! O dear Friend, run in that road that Christ has made so plain!

Trust, *trust,* TRUST, TRUST! That is the way—TRUST! Trust God as your Father! Trust Christ as your Redeemer! Trust the Holy Sprit as your Renewer. Have done with yourself! Have done with everything but your God, your Savior, your Comforter. Trust in Jesus and you have found the way! You are saved, your sins are forgiven you, you are, "accepted in the Beloved." You are not yet in Heaven, but you shall be, in God's good time. You have not yet joined Christ's visible Church, but you are welcome to do so—do not postpone it. You have not yet joined the Church triumphant, but you shall do so one of these days. Therefore, be of good cheer, and the Lord bless you! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JEREMIAH 31:18-26.

Verse 18. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus.* It is God who is speaking here. There is never a moan, or a sob, or a cry, or a sigh, but God hears it. The Lord is very quick of hearing for the sorrows of penitent sinners. There is no mistake about this matter, for He says, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus."

18. *You have chastised me, and I was chastised.* "No good came of it. I smarted, but I was not benefited—'You have chastised me, and I was chastised.'"

18. *As a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn me, and I shall be turned, for You are the LORD, my God.* There was never a heart that spoke thus, unless Grace had been secretly at work with it. And depend upon it, if God has brought us to this point, we are ready to declare Him to be our God and are anxious to be the subjects of His converting Grace. It is because God has looked upon us in His wondrous love. If you desire to be turned towards God, you are already, in a measure, turned towards Him. The desire to feel is a kind of feeling! The longing to believe has some measure of faith in it! Be comforted by this thought, yet be not content to rest where you are, but go on till you have all the blessing that the Lord is waiting and willing to bestow upon you! Happy is the man who is saying to God at this moment, "Turn me, and I shall be turned, for You are the Lord, my God."

19. *Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yes, even confounded because I did bear the reproach of my youth.* When a man has "sown his wild oats" and God, in mercy, helps him to come back from such a dreadful field as that, he recollects what he has been and he is ashamed of himself. Sometimes he is more than half ashamed to mingle with God's people, for he is afraid that they will have nothing to do with such a wretch as he has been. But he is, most of all, ashamed to come near to his God because of the sins of his youth. Yet listen to the Lord's gracious words concerning him.

20. *Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my heart is troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord.* Here we

seem to look into the very heart of God and He is represented to us as though He had contending passions within Him. He speaks angrily one day, but He earnestly remembers mercy the next. God changes not, yet His dealings with men must change because their state varies so much. He sometimes speaks in great wrath while they hold to their sin, but love lies even at the bottom of that wrath—and soon He changes His tone and speaks comfortably—and puts away the sinner's sin when He sees that His anger has worked the due result and the sinner quits his sin to come to his God. Some of you understand this treatment, for you have experienced it. But you cannot comprehend the fullness of mercy and love that is in the heart of God towards the repenting sinner.

21, 22. *Set up signposts, make high heaps: set your heart toward the highway, even the way which you went: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these, your cities. How long will you go about, O you backsliding daughter?* How long will you be seeking comfort where you cannot find it and pleasure where nothing but misery can come?

22, 23. *For the Lord has created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man. Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless you, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness.* Jerusalem was cursed because of sin, but God declared that in His great mercy He would make it to be a place of blessing, and men should speak of it as the, "habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness."

24-26. *And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, farmers and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. Upon this I awaked and beheld, and my sleep was sweet unto me.* He that can sleep and dream as Jeremiah did, may well say that his sleep was sweet to him. May God grant to us, whether we sleep or wake, to be always with Him! Then our time shall be indeed sweet unto us!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—27, 609, 514.

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

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

THE SINGLE-HANDED CONQUEST
NO. 2567

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 24, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 6, 1856.

"I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me."
Isaiah 63:3.

IT is said of some stupendous works of architecture that although you see them every day, you are struck with wonder and admiration every time you behold them and that, although you should live close to them and have your eyes perpetually fixed upon them, yet your admiration of them would by no means decrease, for they are so matchless in symmetry, such patterns of art and such marvelous displays of the skill of man. I know not whether that is true. I believe that the best and grandest achievements of mortals lose their glory when they are too closely examined and that the frequency of our sight of them very much lessens our wondering admiration. But this I know is true concerning Christ Jesus our Lord—you may see Him every day, but the more often you see Him, the more you will wonder at Him and call Him, "Wonderful." You may even have communion with Him every hour, but the frequency of your converse and the constancy of your communion will be so far from diminishing your awe, your love, your respect, your devout adoration of Him, that the more you know Him, the more your wonder and admiration of Him will increase!

Now, who could be expected to know so much about Christ as Christ's own Church? Yet, in the opening of this chapter you find that even she bursts out with such exclamations as this—"Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?" She had often seen Him before. She had often viewed Him under that aspect and doubtless she had seen Him as the Conqueror of mighty heroes, Master over princes and the Lord of the kings of the earth. But at a fresh view of Him, she was so utterly astonished that she could not help crying out, "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?"

Live near to Jesus, Brothers and Sisters. Live *with* Jesus. Live *in* Jesus and you will find Him a theme of such excellent and such endless contemplation that, instead of being tired and weary with the subject of your meditation, you will find it more easy to begin, again, than it was to begin at first—more interesting and more pleasing to consider Him in the

50th year of your knowledge of Him than it was in the first hour that you knew Him! Think much of Him and you will have little cause to think lightly of Him! Constantly meditate on Him and you will the more admire and wonder at His goodness!

We have here our Savior answering the questions of His Church, which she, in wonder, had asked of Him—"Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?" "I that speak in righteousness," He says, "mighty to save." And when again she asks Him, "Why are You red in Your apparel and Your garments like he that treads in the wine vat?" He replies, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me."

Very briefly, as the Spirit shall help us, we shall notice, first, *the interesting figure employed.* Secondly, *the glorious fact stated.* Thirdly, *the solitary Conqueror described.* And then, fourthly, we shall offer *some sweet and salutary considerations suggested,* that we may be refreshed by our meditations. Let our souls be calm and quiet whilst we contemplate the awfully-solemn and sublimely-grand spectacle of the Conqueror of men and the Conqueror of Hell treading the winepress alone.

I. First, then, here is AN INTERESTING FIGURE EMPLOYED—"I have trodden the winepress."

You must understand the circumstances to which these words relate. This is Jesus speaking *after* His conquest over His foes—not Jesus before the battle, but Jesus after it—not Jesus buckling on the harness, not Jesus becoming the Baby of Bethlehem, but Jesus after the battle is fought and the victory is won. There were certain enemies who opposed the salvation of God's people. There were numberless foes who stood in the way of the deliverance of His chosen, but Christ undertook to conquer them and now, on His return, He not only declares that He has overcome them, but He uses an expressive figure to set out some of the facts in that wondrous feat of conquest. "I have trodden the winepress."

First, this denotes *the supreme contempt with which the mighty Conqueror regarded the enemies whom He had overcome.* It is as if He had said, "I have overcome the many foes of My people and I compare My victory over them to nothing but the treading of the winepress. Angels sing My praise, the hosts of the redeemed in Heaven swell the sublime chorus as, in exultant strains, they declare how I have broken the dragon's head and have put down the strength of the oppressor. They tell how mighty kings have been slain in My wrath and giants in My hot displeasure. But as for Myself, I say little about it, I only declare that I have trodden the winepress and have counted My enemies as easy to conquer as if they had been grapes beneath My feet! My people's crimes may have been tremendous and their enemies mighty, but coming up, 'with dyed garments from Bozrah,' I have crushed their foes and My foes just as easily as a treader of grapes treads them under foot. I have trodden them as in a winepress."

O ungodly Sinner, perhaps you think that it will cause God great trouble to destroy you with an utter destruction—it will not! It may be you think that God will have need to exert much power to send your guilty spirit to the loathsome dungeons of Hell, but, ah, it will require no might from Him! If you should continue to be His foe, He will tread you beneath His feet as easily as you could tread grapes beneath yours! What are the berries of the vine beneath the feet of the wine presser? And what shall your soul and body be when the feet of Jesus tread upon them? In vain your ribs of steel! In vain your sinews of brass! In vain your bones of adamant—if such you had. If your spirit were clothed with scales like leviathan's, yet under the feet of Jesus you wouldst be like ripe grapes—the blood of which flows out freely! Yes, terrible shall be the meaning of that figure when Christ shall say of sinners, at the last day, "I have trodden them down as he that treads grapes presses out the juice thereof—'I have trodden the winepress.'"

But, mark you, there is in the figure *an intimation of toil and labor,* for the fruit of the vine is not bruised without hard work. So the mighty Conqueror, though in contempt He says His foes were as nothing but the grapes of the vintage to His might, yet, speaking as a Man like unto us, He had something to do to overcome His foes when He fought with them in the Garden. Sometimes the wine presser is wearied with his labor, although he takes hold of the strap which is placed above him and jerking, and dancing, and laughing, and singing all day, he presses out the juice of the grapes. Yet oftentimes he wipes the sweat from his brow and is tired with his toil. So our blessed Lord, albeit He could have crushed the enemies of His Church like moths beneath His finger, had enough to do to overcome them in the Garden. It was no little pressing of the foot which was needed when He bruised the old dragon's head in Gethsemane! Then He—

"Bore all Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare."

My Soul, meditate on this glorious Wine Presser! Those sins which would have crushed you to pieces, He had to tread beneath His feet. How it must have bruised His heel to tread upon those sins! O how powerfully He must have trodden on those crimes of yours, breaking them into less than nothing! How did it force from Him, not sweat like ours, but drops of blood, when He could say, "I have trodden the winepress." Yet, toil as it was, labor as it might be, costing Him tears and groans, He could say, "I have done it. The great work is fully accomplished—'it is finished'—'I have trodden the winepress alone.'"

Moreover, in the figure employed, *there is an allusion to the staining of the garments.* We see it is so in the verse before the text, "Why are You red in Your apparel, and Your garments like he that treads in the wine vat?" The garments of the wine presser would naturally be sprinkled over with the juice, squirting up from beneath his feet. Ah, my Soul, stand here and solemnly contemplate your Savior, sprinkled with His own blood! Look at Him, when but eight days old, already shedding blood for you! And go on to the time when He commenced the shedding of His

blood, again, in Gethsemane's Garden! Mark you how, in one gory robe, He is enveloped—not like the kings of the earth, in garments of Tyrian-dyed purple, but like the King of Misery, dressed in a crimson robe of blood! Go and mark the blood as it flows from His temple, when the crown of thorns lacerates His brow! Weep when the accursed flagellation of the cruel Roman is tearing off, piece after piece of His quivering flesh! Pursue Him in His weary *via dolorosa,* as He treads the streets of Jerusalem!

Stop and see how each stone on which He treads is stained with His precious blood! Then mark how His hands begin to gush down streams of blood, as the rough iron tears them asunder! See Him now crucified, hung upon the Cross, plunged into the lowest depths of misery!—

"See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did ever such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er His body on the tree."

O Jesus, from the crown of Your head to the sole of Your feet, You were sprinkled with blood! Your inward Man was stained with blood and your outward Man, too! You were covered with blood, You glorious Presser of our sins beneath Your feet! We will not ask again, "'Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?" We know why Your garments are red. You have trodden the winepress of the wrath of God!

Thus have we explained briefly, as best we could, the interesting figure employed by our Lord.

II. And now we come to consider THE GLORIOUS FACT STATED—"I have trodden the winepress."

Christian, I need you a moment! Come with me, my Brothers and Sisters—not to Heaven, nor to Hell, but to the great winepress which the Savior trod. You understand the form of the Eastern winepresses, how they were built up in order that a great quantity of grapes might be put into them, to be trodden by the feet of the wine presser? Come here, then, and look over the edge of this great winepress in which your Savior stood and trampled on your behalf! Gaze down into its depths.

The first thing that you will see in that winepress is *your sins.* Look down attentively. In the middle of the winepress there are the crimes of your youth, like unripe grapes lying there in thick clusters. There lie the sins of your manhood, dark with the black juice of Gomorrah. Do you see them, like the grapes from the vine of Sodom? And see you not the full clusters, like the vine of Sibmah? Look there and see the fruits of your middle age. And there the sins of your old age, too! They are all put into the mighty winepress. Come, then, you chief of sinners, there lie your sins and there lie mine all mingled in one mighty heap! But wait—the Wine Presser enters and puts His feet on them. Oh, contemplate how He presses them! Do you see Him in Gethsemane, treading your sins to

pieces? Come, and look again! There lie the skins—the broken skins—of all your guilt. But there is no guilt there and there are no crimes there now! They are gone, gone, gone! He says, "I *have* trodden the winepress." Look back upon those sins and weep, for they are still your sins, but, at the same time, weep not with bitter and despairing anguish, as if you would be punished for them, for all the black juice, the venom of your guilt, is pressed out and has run away! Christ has caught it in His cup of gall and drained it to its very dregs!

I bid you look down there, for if you have eyes of faith, you will see all your sins destroyed. Do try and look—let not the devil put his hands before your eyes—but look! And if some dark crime, not confessed to man, still rankles in your bosom, look, it is there! And if some cruel injury to your neighbor, or some dire crime to your Maker, still haunts you, look, there it is—it is trampled on just as much as the other! Little sins and great sins, too, all are trampled to pieces, nor could you find one of them even by diligent seeking—

"If I search to find my sins,
My sins could ne'er be found."

They are there, Believer, trodden into less than nothing! They are gone, they are all gone! "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." Look there, Accuser, into the winepress! Look there, Conscience, into the wine vat! Look there, Satan! Do you see the bruised pieces of my former sins? They are all gone! My sins have ceased to be!—

"Covered is my unrighteousness!
From condemnation I am free!"

But come, Believer, and you will see, next, something in Christ's winepress which, perhaps, you did not expect to see. There is Satan, lying with bruised head! How often does he come to afflict you! How terribly does he sometimes roar in your ears and tell you that Hell must be your portion! How does he seek to keep you from your Savior's blood! How frequently has he striven to deprive you of peace, although God loves you! I beseech you, tell Satan this night to come with you to the wine vat of Gethsemane, and when he looks in there, he will see himself! Yes, take Satan and put him into the wine vat and Christ will bruise his head again for you! But there he is, Christian! Do not fear that he can hurt you—he may torment, but he cannot destroy you, for he is chained! He may roar, but he cannot bite! He may frighten, but he cannot injure you! He may startle, but he cannot devour you! He goes about, seeking whom he may devour, but he may not devour you! He may go about and seek as long as he likes—he will never find you, for the Lord has said concerning you, that you never shall be destroyed! Whenever you have a sharp conflict with Satan, tell him about the wine vat and rejoice over him! And as Luther said, "Laugh at the devil," laugh at him and tell him to remember Gethsemane's wine vat. Ask him what he thinks of that and how he likes the bruising he received there. It was a desperate blow which he

gave our Lord in Gethsemane, but it was a heavier blow that our Lord gave him when He took away his power, extracted his sting and left him—still an enemy, but a conquered one—for Christ trampled him in the wine vat!

Look again, Christian! Do you see there—just between your sins and the devil who lies bruised there—an ugly monster? He is a bony, skeleton-looking thing. Do you recognize him? It is your last enemy—"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is *death*." Look at him! Do you note that his skull is broken and his bones are broken, too? Do you mark how death is now a dismantled monarch? There he lies and yet you are afraid of him—though he lies there broken, bruised, battered, injured, ruined, destroyed? There they are—death, the devil, and your sins together—an infernal trio forever trampled beneath the mighty Conqueror's feet! He said, "O Death, I will be your plagues; O Grave, I will be your destruction." And so He was and, henceforth, to the wine vat we will go whenever our adversaries disturb and afflict us!

What else have you to oppose you, Christian? I do not know what it is, but it is all here. Whatever your enemy, go look into the wine vat and see it dead there! Giant Despair took the pilgrims to a place where he showed them the bones of certain pilgrims that he had devoured—and told them it would assuredly be so with them. Do you, with all your doubts and fears, just as Despair did with the pilgrims, say to them, "Doubts and fears, do you see the bones of my old doubts and fears that have been trampled there? In a day or two, you shall be with them." Take today's sins and tell them that they shall be just where yesterday's were—drowned in the blood of Jesus and slain by His blessed Sacrifice! And when Conscience convicts you of your crimes, take him to this winepress. It will stop any ghost of guilt if you take it there, for it is written, "I have *trodden* the winepress alone." It is done. It is finished! Sins, doubts, fears, Hell, death, destruction and self, too—all are trodden beneath the conquering feet of Jesus, the Wine Presser who has "trodden the winepress alone."

III. Now, Christian, come consider THE SOLITARY CONQUEROR DESCRIBED. "I have trodden the winepress alone."

The great lesson God will teach the world is, "I am God and beside Me there is none else." And especially in redemption, He will have it that the glory shall be all His. Hence, Christ never allowed any to share with Him the toil of redemption, nor will He suffer any to share the honors of it. And, moreover, there was no one who could help Him. None could take any part in the work of redemption since there was none able to bear so much as an atom of that mountain of His people's guilt which pressed upon His heart! And there were none able to drink so much as a drop of that cup which He had to drink to the very dregs! He did it all alone, as the fifth verse of this chapter declares—"I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore My own arm brought salvation unto Me; and My fury, it upheld Me."

Come, now, Believer, and let us look at the lonely Jesus. How lonely He was in this world during the few short years of His ministry! I think there never was such a lonely man, living among so many, as the Lord Jesus Christ was. He stood in the crowd and the congregation listened to His preaching—and though many heard with joy, there was no one who could give such sympathy as He needed. He went to a solitary place and talked with His disciples, but they could not sympathize with Him. John did so a little, for he laid his head on Christ's bosom, but it was poor sympathy that even John could give. Jesus must have been, to a very great extent, always a most lonely Man. Who was so pure that they could match His unsullied purity? Who so perfect, that they could abide with Immaculate Perfection? Who so wise as to talk with the Wonderful Counselor? Who so far-seeing as to be able to commune with the Prophet of all the ages? Who so benevolent as to speak with the gracious Jesus—and who so sorrowful as to be a fit companion for the "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief"?

His loneliness increased as His heaviest sorrows came upon Him. When He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, He trod the winepress all alone. I think I see our Savior, like the true Man that He was, clinging a little to His fellows. He says, "Peter, James and John—the other eight may go away. Judas has already gone—they may rest there, at that end of the Garden, but you come with Me, for I am about to be exceedingly sorrowful." He takes them with Him. Ah, but He feels that it would not do to have them with Him while He struggles, for they would die if they were to see His face! His was so terrible a Countenance when His body was racked with pain and His soul was bearing the load of our guilt, that they must inevitably have been stricken with death if they had looked upon that face of sorrow! What heavy drops of bloody sweat flowed from Him in His agony! Still He clung to the three disciples as if He needed some companionship. But, oh, how sorrowful it was to Him, when He came back, to find them all sleeping! Do you not think you see Jesus looking on His three slumbering disciples? There they lie! He goes to them three times, as if He sought some help from man, as if He had hoped that they would condole with Him, for that was all they could do in His grief.

Thrice He goes to them and the third time He says, "Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that does betray Me." Surely, *now* they will rally round Him! They do for a moment, for Peter, with his sword, slashes off the ear of Malchus. But soon, "All His disciples forsook Him and fled." He is taken prisoner by the men with swords and staves. O Earth, has He no Friend? O heavens, have you no Friend for Jesus? Where is Peter? He said, "Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended." Where is John? He has fled! There is no one to be with Jesus. No one to help Him. They take Him before the council, but there is no one to declare His innocence. He stands up in the hall, but there is no one with Him. Yes, there is one—but look at Him! He says, "I tell you, I know not the Man." Soon Peter is cursing and swearing almost before his Master's face!

And now He goes up to Calvary and still there is no one with Him, until, when He is hanging on the Cross, those blessed women come to lift their sorrowful eyes up to their beloved Lord and melt their hearts away in tears. And when the darkness gathered round, so that He could see no one, He was alone, alone, alone, in thick, impenetrable gloom! Hear Him cry, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?" which is, being interpreted, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Then He could cry, "I am treading the winepress alone, and of the people there is none with Me." When He was buried, nobody slept in the grave with Him—no other arose from the same sepulcher on the Resurrection Morning. Ah, Christian, never associate anyone with Jesus in the work of redemption! Rather understand well that this stands forth as a great cardinal Truth of God—that Jesus has trodden the winepress alone and, therefore, HE IS ALL IN ALL!

IV. Now this brings us, having briefly passed over the other points, to some SWEET AND SALUTARY CONSIDERATIONS SUGGESTED by this most blessed and sacred subject.

The first inference is *there is no winepress of Divine wrath for you, O Believer, to tread!* If Jesus trod the winepress, and trod it alone, you shall never have to tread it. What mistakes Christians often make in this matter! You will hear one say that such-and-such a good man was punished for his transgressions—and I have known Believers think that their afflictions were punishments sent from God on account of their sins! The thing is impossible! God has punished us, who are His people, once and for all in Christ and He will never punish us again! He cannot do it, seeing He is a just God. Afflictions are chastisements from a Father's hand, but they are not judicial punishments! Jesus has trodden the winepress and He has trodden it alone, so we cannot tread it. How often have you thought that God would make you feel the weight of some of your sins, that He would cause you to suffer for some of your guilt! Ah, no! Jesus says, "I have trodden the winepress," and if you had to tread it, if you had to suffer the smallest pang of punishment for your iniquities, Christ could no more say, "I have trodden the winepress alone." He has done it completely and there is no punishment reserved for you! For you there are no flames of Hell, for you no punishment, for you no rack—you are freely acquitted, you are fully discharged—nor can you ever again be condemned! Christ, once and for all, has trodden your sins beneath His feet! Therefore, you never, never can be punished for them.

What say you to this, you seekers after the Truth of God? It may be you have heard the doctrine taught that Christ was punished for the sins of everybody and yet that many people are punished for their own sins. You will never find peace or comfort in that doctrine—it is so untrue, so unjust to God, so unsafe for man! We are taught, from the Holy Scriptures, that God has made His Son to be the Substitute for all His people and, "has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." And not one of "us"—the people for whom Christ was punished—can ever be, ourselves, punished! If Jesus did endure our punishment, we stand on this broad ground of unalterable justice, that God cannot, consistently with His Nature, (and

He can do nothing inconsistent with it), ever punish us any more! O rejoice, Christian Brothers and Sisters, that ours is a solid foundation! The elect—all who are united to Christ by a living faith—have been punished in Christ and now they stand in Him, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners!" None can lay anything to their charge. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Glorious God, unto You be praise, unto us be shame that we do not better love and more fully value this inestimable Doctrine of Substitution and its necessary consequences of complete justification!—

"Remember, Lord, that Jesus bled,
That Jesus bowed His dying head,
And sweated bloody sweat.
He bore Your wrath and curse for me
In His own body on the tree
And more than paid my debt!
Surely He has my pardon bought—
A perfect righteousness worked out.
His people to redeem—
O that His righteousness might be
By Grace imputed now to me,
As were my sins to Him!"

Another thought for you, O child of God, is this. *There are winepresses of suffering, although not of punishment, which you will have to tread.* But I want you to remember that *you will not have to tread these winepresses alone.* Tell a little child to go down a lonely lane on a dark night and the child says, "Mother, I don't want to go there." "I will go with you," says the mother. "Then I will go," says the child. "I will go anywhere with you, Mother." Ah, Christian, there are many dark lanes for you to go down, but you will not have to go there alone! There are many winepresses—not of God's wrath, but of His chastening hand—for you to tread, but you will not have to tread them alone. Oh, is not this a Truth of God that ought to ravish our hearts? We shall never tread the winepress alone! Minister, you go to your pulpit, but if God has sent you, you will never go alone! Your Master's feet are behind you and your Master, Himself, stands by you! Deacons, you have sometimes to steer the Church in troublous waters. You need great wisdom, but there is an Arch-Deacon with you—you shall not go to your labors alone!

Sunday school teacher, you go to your class with earnestness and you think you teach alone. Ah, no, there is another Teacher sitting by you who can teach better than you can! He teaches hearts, while you teach only heads. He teaches souls, while you only teach bodies. He will teach for you! O daughter of affliction, you who lie on your bed of languishing, you lie not there alone! It is not an angel there that shades your head with its pure wing, but it is Jesus who stands and puts His pierced hand on your burning brow. Dying saint, you fear to die, but you shall not die alone! Jesus turns Bed-Maker to each one of His people. David says, "You will make all his bed in his sickness."—

"Jesus can make a dying bed

Feel soft as downy pillows are.
While on His breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there."

What is your trial, Christian? "Oh, a dark one!" you say. It may be so, but His rod and His staff shall comfort you. His right hand shall guide you. What is your grief, Christian? "Ah, a deep one!" you say. But "when you pass through the waters," Jesus whispers, "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." In the old *Pilgrim's Progress* I used to read in my grandfather's house, I remember the picture of Hopeful in the river holding Christian up—and the engraver has done it very well. Hopeful has his arm around Christian and lifts up his hands, and says, Fear not, Brother, I feel the bottom." That is just what Jesus does in our trials—He puts His arm around us, points up, and says, "Fear not! The water may be deep, but the bottom is good." And though the cold streams of trouble rush down the river, do not fear—Christ is with you passing through the river—you will not have to pass through it alone. He trod the winepress for us, but we shall never have to tread it! It would be an ill day for us, Beloved, if we had to tread it. Some of God's people have tried to do a little for themselves and tried to do it alone, but they have made a sorry mess of it. If we seek to do anything in our own strength, it is all over with us! But he who lives with Jesus and begs Him to be with him, shall find Him with him in winepresses, in Gethsemanes, and in Gabbathas—and if it were necessary that we should be crucified on Calvary, we would find Christ on Calvary crucified with us! You will not, Christian, have to pass through the river without your Master!

We remember an old tale of our boyhood, how poor Robinson Crusoe, wrecked on a foreign island, rejoiced when he saw the print of a man's foot. So is it with the Christian in his trouble—he shall not despair in a desolate land because there is the footprint of Christ Jesus on all our temptations and troubles! Go on rejoicing, Christian! You are in an inhabited country—your Jesus is with you in all your afflictions and in all your woes! You shall never have to tread the winepress alone!

But, lastly, you servants of the living God, since Jesus trod the winepress alone, I beseech you bear with me while, for my Master's sake, I bid you *give all things to Him.* Alone He suffered—will you not love Him, alone? Alone He trod the winepress—will you not serve Him? Alone He purchased your redemption—will you not be His property and His, alone? Oh, have you given half of yourself to the world and only half to your Master? Did the world ever bless you? Did the world redeem you? Was the world crucified for you? Did the world tread the winepress for you? No! Then give not the world a portion of your heart! You have some dear relative whom you love with all your soul, but be careful, O Christian, that your heart is still set most on your Lord! Did that friend tread the winepress for you? Did that friend drink the gall for you? Did that friend suffer for you on the Cross? No! Then let Jesus stand first and foremost. Let Him sit King upon the throne and no one else but He. And

when you daily go forth to labor, take heed that you labor not for self, or pleasure, or any worldly object, but that you labor for Jesus!

If the world says, "Come with me, and I will show you all manner of delights," reply, "O world, I cannot come! I never saw your feet in the winepress." Does lust invite you? Cry. "O lust, I cannot love you, for you never sweat a drop of blood for me!" Yes, if all the world's inhabitants should open wide their loving arms to beseech you to come in and forsake your Lord, answer, "No, no! You did not tread the winepress and that is all I care about! Jesus trod the winepress alone, and I will give myself wholly to Him." Half-hearted Christians, you who divide yourselves in two—giving one half to Christ and the other to lust—you are not the Lord's! "You cannot serve God and mammon." There can be only one Master and one Lord because there was but one Redeemer, one Friend, one Governor, One whom we live on, for whom we would even dare to die, because there is only One who dared to die for us. Never, I beseech you, Christians, and I beseech myself, also, for I plead with myself when I plead with you—never forget this—Jesus trod the winepress alone! And always take care that you have Him alone as King in your heart.

If you ask me, tonight, to paint Redemption, I shall have to put only one figure in the picture. We may paint groups when we depict Creation, for the morning stars sang together. We may paint groups when we picture the Resurrection, for an angel rolled away the stone. But if we paint Redemption, there can be but one figure and that figure is "the Man Christ Jesus." So, if you would have a painting in your heart, I bid you paint no groups upon the canvas of your soul, but ask God's Holy Spirit to paint on it one name, one lovely Being, one adorable Personage—Christ, who trod the winepress alone!

Queen Mary said that when she died, they would find the word, "Calais," written on her heart. Ah, Christian! Live so that when you die, all will know that the name, "Jesus," is printed on your heart, for it is certain that your name is deeply cut on His very heart and on His hands, and on His brow—it is written in His precious blood! Give Him not only the best place in your heart, but *all* your heart! Often do you sing—

"Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it.
Prone to leave the God I love—
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it,
Seal it from Your courts above!"

Brothers and Sisters who will now come into close fellowship with your Lord at His Table, may this one idea engross your mind, that it is—

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."

And you despisers of the Cross, oh, let me tell you that you are as grapes in the winepress! If you die ungodly, unsaved, unrighteous, unforgiven—you must be cast into the great wine vat of the wrath of God, hurled into Hell with myriads of your fellows, like grapes fully ripe, cut off by the sickle of the angel—and horrible shall be the day when Christ shall tread on you in His fury and trample upon you in His hot displeas-

ure! God save you from being put in the wine vat! May you be able to cast your sins in there instead, that Christ may trample on them!

I cannot close my sermon without recurring to the happy circumstance that on this day, six years ago, I found deliverance, myself, from the bondage of Egypt and rejoiced in the liberty wherewith Christ made me free! What if my Master would, by my lips, bring another soul to Himself! What do you say, poor Trembler? Did you hear the text of this morning? "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

[In preaching from these words in the morning, Mr. Spurgeon said, "Six years ago, today, as near as possible at this very hour of the day, I was 'in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity,' but had yet, by Divine Grace, been led to feel the bitterness of that bondage and to cry out by reason of the soreness of its slavery. Seeking rest and finding none, I stepped within the House of God and sat there, afraid to look upward lest I should be utterly cut off, and lest His fierce wrath should consume me. The minister rose in the pulpit, and, as I have done this morning, read this text—'Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.' I looked that moment—the Grace of faith was vouchsafed to me in the same instant! And now I think I say with truth—

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

I shall never forget that day while memory holds its place. Nor can I help repeating this text whenever I remember that hour when first I knew the Lord." [See Sermon #50, Volume 2, *Sovereignty and Salvation*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

Did you hear that? Then hear it yet again. And have you looked? If not, oh, look now! Have you looked to Him? If you have not seen Him, still look, and you shall see Him, by-and-by. But look now! It is all He asks you to do and even that, He bestows upon you! Look now, poor Sinner! Look now, for Christ's sake, for your soul's sake, for Heaven's sake if you would escape the damnation of Hell! Look and that look shall save you! Catch but one glimpse of that dear head crowned with thorns—get but one glance from His sweet eyes full of pity—catch but one glimpse of that smiling countenance, or, if you cannot look so high, see but the sole of His pierced feet and you are saved!

For it is still written, "They looked unto Him and were lightened." "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth."

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.

SABBATH-WORK
NO. 2568

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 1, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 18, 1883.

"And on the same day was the Sabbath."
John 5:9.

OUR Divine Master healed men every day of the week. From the first day even to the close of the seventh day, He went about doing good and healing all manner of diseases. The healing virtue did not flow from Him occasionally, but perpetually. It was not like that famous pool which was only now and then touched with the angel's wing and so made salutary to the sick folk lying around—but whoever stepped into the pool of Christ's mercy found healing at any hour of the day or night!

Still, it is worthy of notice that the Lord Jesus frequently made the Sabbath to be a high day of Grace and blessing. There was, I suppose, something about that day that led Him more especially to display His great power, or, perhaps, He felt bound to meet the superstition of the Pharisees, and He met it by a flood-tide of mercy upon that day to the sons of men. I have read to you the records of six notable miracles which were worked by our Lord on the Sabbath. [See EXPOSITION at end of sermon.] I need not read them, again, but I will just remind you that those miracles comprised the casting from a devil in the synagogue, the healing of a man whose hand was withered, the lifting up of a woman who had been bound by infirmity for 18 years, the instantaneous cure of the dread disease of dropsy, the recovering of a man who had been afflicted with palsy for 38 years so that he could not stir and the opening of the eyes of one who was born blind—six notable miracles to render the Sabbath most famous as a day of the display of Christ's power!

The Sabbath was a day of rest and Christ did not break His rest by His miracles, for He was God, so it was rest to Him to do good. You remember how, when He spoke to the woman of Samaria at the well of Sychar, He told His disciples that it was His meat and drink to be dealing out mercy to her. He was refreshed by what, to others, might have been wearisome and, assuredly, whenever the Lord Jesus worked a deed of mercy, it was rest to His heart. And, moreover, it was giving rest to others. To those who had been afflicted so long, what rest His miracles brought! To that poor daughter of Abraham who had been bound 18 years—what rest it was, once more, to straighten herself and to stand upright, and to glorify God for the marvelous miracle that had been

worked! And the man who had been bedridden for 38 years—what a time of merciful rest that Sabbath was for him! To take up his bed and walk was to be made truly to rest! Not for all that long period had he enjoyed such rest as he did on that memorable Sabbath when Christ healed him!

So, then, viewing the Lord Jesus Christ as Divine, I say that He committed no breach of the rest of God. He first enjoyed it, Himself, by working the miracle, and then He spread the influence of that rest upon those who were helped by Him. Viewing Him, also, in His condescending capacity as the God-Man, in the form of the Servant of men, He did not break the day of rest, for His healing was a form of holy ministry. He was preaching sermons while He was healing the sick—and the best sort of sermons, too—sermons that must strike and be remembered, for men could see them with their eyes as well as hear them with their ears! His cures are acted discourses. Whenever we try to interpret any of the miracles, I am sure you feel that we do not put the Truth of God into them, but that the Truth of God is already there! There is much precious teaching in every miracle that He worked.

The ruler of the synagogue might just as well have confessed that he broke the Sabbath when he read a chapter of the Scriptures as have said that Christ broke the Sabbath by healing anyone. They were really both doing the same thing, only the mere official was doing it in a much poorer and more perfunctory manner. Christ was grandly teaching while He was healing the sick, for what is the Sabbath? Is it not a day set apart for the Glory of God, for the reverencing of His most holy name? And, my Brothers and Sisters, what could bring God more Glory than for the Lord Jesus Christ to be working these miracles which caused men to glorify Him? She who had been bound for 18 years—the first thing she did when she stood upright was to glorify God! And others in the synagogue, of nobler spirit than Pharisees and lawyers, when they saw what God was doing by Him whom they thought to be a Prophet, glorified God. Although Jesus, in a measure, worked, He was all the while doing Sabbath-work—the very service for which the day was set apart, that God might be honored among the sons of men. Fools and slow of heart—no, *foul of heart*, were they, to bring the charge of breaking the Sabbath against our blessed Master for what He did.

I am going, very briefly, to refer to these cures of Christ in the fond hope that He will transfer from the seventh to the first day of the week the Glory which He put upon His ancient Sabbath. I need not say in the "hope" that He will do it, as though it were a new thing, for He has done it all through the Christian era! I suppose that there have been more souls born to God on the last day of the week than on all the other days of the week. Certainly, this day, on which Christ rose from the grave, has been the time of the resurrection of ten thousands times ten thousands—and when we have met together, on this first day of the week, to sing hymns and to pray in the name of Jesus—and to talk of His great love and of all that came of it, He has been especially present with us, and He has worked wondrous miracles of mercy many and many a time. May He do so among us now!

I. First, then, concerning Christ's Sabbath cures, I make this observation—THESE CURES MEET MANY CASES—and we may expect that Christ, who worked such cures in the past, will continue to meet similar cases of need to-day.

The first was *a man under Satanic influence.* Christ spoke the Word and the devil came out of him. There may be such persons here. I have known many children of God in that sad condition. Ah, poor creatures! They have been assailed with blasphemous thoughts which they have hated and loathed, and yet the thoughts would come. They could not stop them. And if it so happens to God's people, much more will it happen to those who, as yet, have never fled to Christ! I believe that there are some men who are transported in wickedness far beyond themselves and who both say and do things which would not have entered into their hearts, bad as they are, if it were not for Satan taking possession of them and bearing them beyond themselves. Just as I am sure that the Spirit of God often works in gracious men things which would not come, even of their renewed nature, carrying them from themselves by a holy ecstasy and a divine enthusiasm, so does Satan, on the other hand, work in ungodly men beyond themselves, bearing them into a kind of frenzy and fanaticism of iniquity. Well, if I am addressing any such—if it is a lucid interval with some poor wretch—if the drunk is sober to-night—if the man who plunges into vice is here—yes, even if the devilish spirit is still within him, I am glad that he is here, for my Master can rebuke that spirit and cast it from the man to never return! He will need more done to him than that, but that will be a grand beginning. Oh, that, in His infinite mercy, Jesus, the enthroned King, would manifest His Divinity by casting out the spirit of darkness from the stronghold which He has made for Himself in the hearts of men! That case, then, was met by Christ on the Sabbath.

The next case was that of a *man conscious of a very grievous inability.* He had an arm which hung helplessly by his side. He could not earn bread for his children. He could do nothing to help himself. His arm was withered—it was not merely dislocated, so that he could not lift it, but it had gradually dried up. The sinews had shrunk, the flesh had gone, the arm had become a mummified useless object. There are spiritual inabilities in all unregenerate men, but there are some inabilities of which they are conscious. "I cannot pray," says one, "oh, that I could!" "I cannot believe," says another, "would God that I could!" "I cannot do this, and I cannot do that." Dear Friend, whatever your inability may be, the Lord Jesus Christ is able to give you, even now, that power of which you lament the absence. He can say, "Stretch out your withered hand" and if you are but obedient to His gracious command, you shall stretch it out! You shall pray. You shall believe. You shall at once quit the sin that now holds you spellbound. Oh, blessed be His name, though the power to do these things is not in *you*, it is in Him! All that is needed to meet the sinner's case is in Christ, for all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth. Look up, then, you with the withered hands, for Christ is still present and able to heal, now, just as of old.

The third case was that of *a woman who had been afflicted, I suppose, by spinal disease, till she was bent double.* She could not lift herself up. It was something more than a more stoop—it was evidently a very painful doubling of herself up so that her face looked rather to the earth than, as it should look, towards Heaven. Poor creature! Eighteen years she had suffered from this grievous bend, but the Lord Jesus lifted her up and made her straight in one single minute! There may be, here, some very desponding and even despairing soul, but the Lord can lift up that soul. Last Thursday morning I preached over in the City Temple and I had my wages for preaching as soon as the sermon was done, for when I came from the pulpit there met me a brother minister, and he said, "Sir, I cannot tell you now, but I will write tomorrow—my wife is set at liberty!" He wrote to tell me how she had been in despair and what sorrow she had had, and what a grief it had been to him. But while I preached upon, "Cast not away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward," she was brought from bondage. Oh, how I praised and blessed God and thought that I would like to preach day and night if I might but be the channel of such blessing again and again! It was the Master who made that poor crooked woman straight and if there is another here who is like she is, He can work a similar miracle for that poor soul! I know that many of you belong to the Despondency family. Miss Much-Afraid, down there, you think there is nobody so bad as you, so lost as you are. But my Lord and Master can lay His hand upon you and you shall be straightened at once! Oh, what a blessed thought this is—Jesus worked this miracle on the Sabbath! Oh, that He would work others like it on this Sabbath!

The fourth case was that of *the man with the dropsy,* an inward complaint which would soon have ended his life if Christ had not cured him. Last Wednesday I saw a dear man of God who was afflicted with dropsy and I bade him farewell. He said that, in the night, when he slept a little, the water seemed to rise almost to his heart, and he knew that he must soon die. And when I called just now, I found that he was gone. I may be addressing someone who has an inward fatal complaint—I do not mean bodily, but spiritually—and you feel that it must soon be all over with you and that you must perish forever. But, dear Friend, you need not perish—if you come within range of my Master's hand, you shall live, for He is able to pluck men from the jaws of destruction! As it is said of this man, that He took him and healed him and bade him go his way, so can He do with you. God grant that He may!

The next case was that of *a man paralyzed.* I believe that the man, after being so afflicted for 38 years, had become paralyzed in his mind as well as in his body. He was a poor feeble creature who said to Christ, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool." So the Lord Jesus Christ said to him, "Will you be made whole?"—as if He would see whether the paralysis had penetrated even into his will—and when the man said that he had hardly any hope about it, but only described his sad case, the Master said at once, "Rise, take up your bed, and walk." And the man did so. Now, if you have been long a trembling

seeker, not so much in earnest as you ought to have been, and have now come to be spiritually paralyzed so that you do not seem to have any energy left, yet still my Lord can give you energy and speak the healing words so that you shall rise and take up your bed and walk!

The last case was that of *the man who was born blind.* I know that he is represented here. Plenty of you were born blind. No, more—there is not one of you who was not born *spiritually* blind—and, "since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." Perhaps it was not heard till that day, but on that blessed Sabbath, Christ opened that blind man's eyes! Oh, that He would take away the scales of prejudice that are blinding so many tonight! Oh, that He would remove the natural opposition to the Gospel which blinds so many eyes and hearts—and give men to see tonight! He can do it. Oh, that He may! I think that I have proved my assertion that these Sabbath cures meet many cases. They certainly meet the cases of many who are here. Christ is still, "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them."

II. I shall only be able to say a little upon my second point which is that THESE CURES REPRESENT VARIOUS PROCESSES OF GRACE. The way in which Christ healed, then, shows how He heals now.

The first man He *healed with a word.* That word was not spoken to the man, but to *the devil in the man.* The devil in the man made a disturbance in the congregation. He cried, "Let me alone." Christ said, "Hold your peace and come from him." And I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ still deals with the devil in that way. He never gives him a word more than is necessary. Oh, that He would say, "Come from him," to some drunk who is here, and who has the drink devil in him, or to some swearer or some other great sinner who is here! That man under Satanic influence was healed by a word and Christ can do the same thing with a word now!

The man with a withered hand was *healed by a personal word.* The Lord Jesus Christ said to him, "Rise up and stand forth in the midst." That he could do, for he had not withered feet and there he stood. It is a grand thing when the Gospel message picks a man out from his fellows and he feels that the preacher is speaking specially to him. Have you ever felt that? It is one of the ways in which Christ saves men. I am preaching to the whole congregation, but Christ is not—He is preaching to you, my Friend—if He means to bless you and you feel as if you were stood out to be shot at. After Christ had given the man a personal pointed word, He said to him, "Stretch forth your hand." It was done at once at the word of command and now He says to you, poor guilty Sinner, "Believe! Believe in Me and you shall be saved." Oh, that Christ might speak that word of command straight into your soul, for, as the Lord lives, if you believe in Him, you shall not perish, but you shall have everlasting life! In this man's case it was a personal word that worked the healing he needed.

In the next case, there was *a touch as well as a word.* The woman was in the crowd in the synagogue, bent double, and, perhaps, could not even see the Christ. But He said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from

your infirmity," and He laid His hands on her—and with that word and that touch she was loosed in a minute! She was called upon to do nothing except to believe that it was all done—and so she lifted herself up. The Lord Jesus Christ gave her the strength to rise and she did rise! There are many conversions like that. All of a sudden a man finds that all has been done for him—Christ has saved him, he is forgiven and so he rises and stands upright. Now, poor woman over yonder, do that! Believe that Christ has loved you and given Himself for you. Oh, may His Spirit enable you to do so! Now you are upright, are you not? You feel as if you could stand up and shout, "Hallelujah! The Lord has done it! He has broken my bonds and set His child at liberty." It was a word and a touch in that poor woman's case.

In the next case—that of the man afflicted with the dropsy—there was *healing without a word.* I do not think that there was even a word spoken to him. Christ saw the man swollen as He stood before him and it is written, "He took him, and healed him, and let him go." And I have known the Lord save some souls without any spoken word. His own secret power has done it all. The man has been sitting at his work, or walking about and, suddenly—he knew not how—he felt his heart become soft, his spirit inclined to his Savior, he looked to Him and was lightened and his face was not ashamed.

In the case of the paralytic, there was not only a word, *there were two words.* The first was an enquiring word, meant to arouse him. "Will you be made whole?" This was spoken to wake him up and make him think and hope. And then came the commanding word, "Take up your bed and walk." The Lord sometimes brings men into a state of spiritual health by two words instead of one. For a little while, He seems to ask them whether they really will be saved, whether they have any wish to be saved—and when earnest desires after salvation are excited, then comes the Gospel precept, "Believe and live"—and they do believe and live!

In the last case—that of the blind man—*Christ used means as well as words,* but the means were very poor ones, as we think. He spat and made clay of the spittle—and then put the clay on the man's eyes. "More likely to blind him," you say, "than to give him sight." And I have known a sermon, of which I have thought when I went home, "I wish I had never gone into the pulpit." I have been ready to cry my eyes out about it. The Lord could not bless it—so I thought—but He did. It was from His own mouth, after all! Though I was but the clay, He put that clay on the man's eyes—even my poor rough statement of the Truth of God which seemed as if it would blind the man from seeing Him, but it did not—it opened his eyes. The Lord can use very strange means—and He does. I have known Him use means in men's conversion which I thought He could not use. And it makes one speak with bated breath about some people who seem to use very odd means to bring men to Christ. If the Lord brings them, the end may not justify the means, but, at the same time, it makes us very aware of what we say, lest we fight against God. If the Lord chooses to spit, let Him spit. And if He chooses to use clay and that seems a very strange thing to put on blind eyes, it is better than the

best ointment if Christ ordains it! So let Him do things after His own fashion, for He always does them right.

Now, which shall be the way in which He will heal you? Well, it will not matter, dear Friend, what means are used—so long as your cure is effected, God shall have the glory of it!

III. I want you to notice now, in the third place, very briefly, indeed, that THESE CURES ON THE SABBATH WERE WORKED BOTH IN AND OUT OF THE SYNAGOGUE.

The first was *the man who was misbehaving himself in the synagogue.* I do not say to any, "Come, and misbehave yourselves in the House of God," but I do say, "Come anyway you can to the place where prayer is known to be made." I would rather that a man should come to ridicule the Gospel than not come to hear it at all! Here is a man, with the devil in him, disturbing the worship in the synagogue by crying out to Jesus, "Let me alone." Yet it was a blessing for him to be there and a great blessing for him that the devil was not quiet that morning! The devil is very crafty, but he is often a great fool and he made a huge mistake when he took to bawling out that Sabbath. Whenever I hear a man swear, I always pray for him and, I have sometimes thought, when I have heard an oath, it has been a warning bell ringing to let me know that it was time for me to pray. It is a horrible thing that men should blaspheme, curse and swear, but I believe that there would be less of these evils if all Christians prayed whenever they heard an oath, for the devil would see that it would not pay him, for, fool though he is, he has some sense left. At all events, this man was in the synagogue making a disturbance.

The next person was the man with a withered hand. He could not do any work and, beside that, it seems that *he had some love for the House of God and there Christ picked him out* and blessed him. The woman who was bent double was also there. I like the idea of her going to the synagogue. No doubt it was a trouble for her to walk and she was a very pitiable object—yet she loved the place. I believe she was a gracious woman, for it was said of her as it is not said of others, "she glorified God" when she was made straight. Never mind what your infirmity is, dear Friends, be sure to come to the House of God. There was a dear Sister who used to sit on my left hand, here, and who did not hear a word I said, for she was deaf. But she always came because, she said, she thought it was a good example to those who were round about her to come and sit here. Besides, she said, somebody told her what hymn we were singing and she could join in that. And so, to the day of her death, she was still here. Yes, we love the place where God deigns to meet with His people and we hope to get a blessing there, somehow or other, as this poor woman did.

But the other three people healed in these Sabbath miracles were not in the synagogue. *The man with the dropsy was cured after synagogue hours.* The Lord Jesus Christ had gone to eat bread with a certain Pharisee and it was then that He saw this poor man. O dear Friends, may the Lord bless you after the service is over, if He does not bless you while the service is going on! May He bless you at your meal! You who love the Lord, pray Him to bless men and women when they are sitting at their

supper, tonight, after the sermon is over, and they have gone home and have not, perhaps, felt the power of the Word. God can bless them even there, as this poor dropsied man received his cure when the Sabbath services were over and he had gone to his evening meal!

The next case, I think, was *early* in *the morning, before the service.* Whether it was or not, does not matter, for it was the case of a man who could not go to the synagogue. He had the palsy, he could not even step into the healing bath, so I know that he could not go to the synagogue—yet the Lord came and healed him. Pray, dear Friends, for the sick folk at home and, when you are, yourselves, ill, do not think that you are shut out from Christ because you are shut out from the public means of Grace! The Lord can come and bless you wherever you are! Oh, what a Savior my Master is! If you cannot come to His House, He can come to your house! If you cannot go to the synagogue, He can come and make a temple of your little chamber and save you there!

As for the blind man, he was not in the synagogue, but he used to go, for we read that they cast him from the synagogue, so he must have been formerly in it. But on that occasion he was not there. *I wonder whether the reason was because he was too poor.* His neighbors asked, "Is not this he that sat and begged?" Perhaps he did not like to go because he had not fit clothes to go in. I always think it is a very sad thing that people should make that excuse. I do not care what clothes you come in—the only clothes that are unfit to wear are those that you have not paid for! Let our clothes be ever so poor, or ever so mean, do not stay away from the House of God on that account, but come and listen to the Gospel. But if it really is the case that you cannot come, what a mercy it is that God can bless the poor who do not come to His House—for He can go to them.

Perhaps He means somebody who is here tonight—some dear child of His—to call in, on the road home, to see some poor person who has not come because he says that he has not fit clothes. Knock at his door and say, "Our minister was saying, this evening, that some people did not come to God's House because they thought they had not fit clothes, and his words brought you to my mind. He said that God could bless them at home. I thought that, perhaps, the Lord might bless you through me. Let me tell you about Jesus Christ for a few minutes. I won't tire you. Then let me pray with you before I go." Why, who knows? Perhaps, this very night, you may be a messenger of mercy to some poor creature of that kind.

IV. Now I close with what might have been the whole of my sermon, for there is enough in this last division to preach from for a month. It is a very singular thing that all these Sabbath cures were cures of PERSONS WHO DID NOT ASK TO BE HEALED. They were all instances of free, Sovereign Grace giving blessing to those who did not crave it.

The first one did not ask for it, but *entreated Christ to leave him alone,* yet he was healed. The next, the man with the withered hand, I suppose *did not even think of it* till Christ said, "Stand forth." And then he stood forth and his hand was restored. The next, the poor woman who had

been bent double for 18 years, I should think that she *did not hope for such a thing.* Certainly, she did not say a word about it, but, to her astonishment, mercy burst upon her with these words, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." What a surprise it was to her, as the Grace of God often is when it dispels man's despair! The dropsied man *did not ask for healing,* but Christ took him and healed him, and sent him on his way. As for the paralytic man, *he had not nerve enough left to ask.* Christ had to ask him, "Will you be made whole?" And then the blind man, he also, perhaps, *had never dreamed of such a thing,* for he expressed his own astonishment—"Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." They did not ask for the blessing, yet they received it.

Well, what is the inference from all that I have been saying? Why, that you who ask for the blessing shall receive it, for if Christ goes to those who do *not* ask, you who have been asking—asking for days and perhaps for months, may well pluck up courage and expect His mercy—and you shall have it. Why, if a man in the street gives alms to a poor beggar who did not ask anything of him, the boy at the crossing will be touching his hat to him, I am sure, and following him all across the road, for he is sure of getting something! He says, "He gave to that fellow who did not ask. Surely he will give to me if I do ask" Oh, believe that it must be so with you if you ask of the Lord Jesus Christ! Surely you seekers shall be finders.

The next inference I draw is this. What a mercy that we are able, sometimes, to bring into the House of God some who have never asked God to bless them. Have you brought in any tonight? If you have not, you know that you ought to do it, for it is the duty of Christians to be constantly bringing in outsiders where God gives a blessing. Some of you have brought others. Well, then, if the Lord Jesus Christ spontaneously blessed those people who seemed to be there by accident, much more will He bless those whom you have brought to His House and for whom you are now praying that He would bless them. Do not say, "It is of no use to bring in such-and-such, he is not at all seriously inclined." That is the very person to bring in! Those who are seriously inclined will come of themselves—*you* are to bring those who do not have any desire to come! It is grand work to be plowing virgin soil that has never been broken up before. It is a great mercy to speak into an ear that has not been stopped up with Gospel wax, an ear that listens to the Gospel as a thing that is fresh and new, and which comes with startling novelty to the soul. Bring in people of that sort! Remember that we do not trust in *their* will—our trust is in the will of God! We do not trust in *their* power—our trust is in the power of Almighty Grace! We do not trust in their coming here to seek Christ—our trust is in the fact that "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost!"

As for you who have never trusted the Savior, all you have to do is to cast yourselves, with all your weight of sin, upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I solemnly charge you to take heed that you do not neglect it. Beware lest while you are thinking about it, the moments

should steal away and hope should steal away with the moments. Some of you have come here a good many Sabbath nights hoping to lay hold on Christ—leave your hoping and lay hold on Jesus! May the blessed Spirit now bid you stretch out that withered hand and grasp eternal life! It is within reach of everyone who desires to have it—it may be yours, now, if you trust Him who brings it to you. But do not, I pray you, continue longer in unbelief. If you do, I think I know what will happen to you. You will begin to say, "There is no hope for me." And then you will leave off coming to hear the Gospel and then what is likely to become of you?

As I look at some of my hearers, I might well settle my countenance, as Elisha did when he looked on Hazael. He could not bear to think of all that the man would do—and when the man himself heard the prophecy, he said, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Yes, he was dog enough to do even that! A Friend was speaking to me of an unhappy man whose life has been one of licentiousness and crime—and who has gone away from his country—he used to sit by his wife's side in this house and he said that he would one day turn over a new leaf. But then he did not yield himself to Christ. So, when he did turn over a new leaf, it was a blacker one than he had ever turned over, before, and, unless you repent, some of you will do the same as that man did. God bless and save you, dear Friends, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 4:33-36; 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; JOHN 5:1-9; 9:1-14.

We are going to read the Inspired records of several of our Savior's Sabbath cures, for they are very instructive.

Luke 4:33-36. *And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone! What have we to do with You, You of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know You, who You are: the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold your peace and come from him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came from him, and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and spoke among themselves, saying, What a word is this! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.* This was a very remarkable cure worked by the Lord Jesus Christ on the Sabbath. Now let us turn to another, which is recorded in the sixth chapter of this same Gospel.

Luke 6:6-10. *And it came to pass also on another Sabbath, that He entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched Him, whether He would heal on the Sabbath; that they might find an accusation against Him. But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing. Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do evil? To save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all.—* I think I see that piercing

glance which read their very hearts, and condemned the wickedness it saw there—"Looking round about upon them all"—

10, 11. *He said unto the man, Stretch forth your hand. And he did so and his hand was restored whole as the other. And they were filled with madness and communed one, with another, what they might do to Jesus.* This was a second miracle worked by our Lord on the Sabbath and it, also, was a very notable one. Follow on in the same Gospel until you come to the 13th Chapter, at the 10th verse.

Luke 13:10-17. *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, but 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, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath? And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.* His adversaries might well be ashamed and the people might well rejoice at such a display of His power and mercy! But the point I want you to notice is that the poor woman was set at liberty by the Lord Jesus on the Sabbath. There is another Sabbath miracle recorded in the next chapter.

Luke 14:1-6. *And it came to pass, as He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him. And, behold, there was a certain man before Him which had the dropsy. And Jesus answering spoke unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? And they held their peace. And He took him, and healed him, and let him go; and answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath? And they could not answer Him again to these things.* Christ's question was unanswerable unless they wished to condemn themselves. Now I want you to kindly turn to the next Evangelist, in whose Gospel you will find the record of the fifth miracle which our Savior worked on the Sabbath.

John 5:1-9. *After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market, a pool which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whoever, then, after the troubling of the water, first stepped in, was made whole of whatever disease he had. And a certain man was there which had an infirmity thirty and*

eight years. When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He said unto him, Will you be made whole? The impotent man answered Him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steps down before me. Jesus said unto him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath. I hope to speak on these miracles in my discourse, so only briefly refer to them now, but this Sabbath afforded another memorable instance of our Lord's healing power. In the ninth chapter of John's Gospel you have the remarkable story of the man born blind.

John 9:1-3. *And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents.* That is to say, their sin was not the cause of his blindness.

3-14. *But that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world. When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam, (which is, by interpretation, Sent). He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing. The neighbors, therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, he is like he: but he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him, How were your eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not. They brought him to the Pharisees that before was blind. And it was the Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.* This gracious act of Christ was made another occasion of complaint on the part of the Pharisees—and it is the sixth instance in which we are very specially and definitely informed that our Lord Jesus Christ worked miracles of healing on the Sabbath. Oh, that He would do similar works in our midst even now in a spiritual sense, if not literally!

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

THE BACKSLIDER'S DOOR OF HOPE
NO. 2569

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 8, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 22, 1883.

"And I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor for a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt."
Hosea 2:15.

A FORTNIGHT ago, you will remember that we considered the very terrible description which the Prophet gave of the sin of God's ancient people. [See Sermon #2564, Volume 44, "*Strange Ways of* Love"—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org] They were even described coarsely, because only such imagery could set forth their disgraceful filthiness in departing from Jehovah, the living and true God, and setting up false gods, the rites of whose worship were indescribably obscene. I would not dare to mention what these men did under the guise of religion when they turned aside from Jehovah and set up Baal, Ashtaroth and other idols that were not gods. You will also remember how the Lord, in His holy jealousy, dealt with His people. He sent them affliction after affliction. He took away from them those mercies which they had prostituted for the purpose of sin. He made them poor, sick and wretched. They were invaded and enslaved by the neighboring nations whose deities they had set up in the place of the Most High. Further, you remember—for we tried to describe it—they were so desperately set on mischief that they would not be turned from their wicked ways—they revolted more and more. The more it cost them to sin, the more extravagant they were in it.

Then it was that the Lord, in great mercy, changed His mode of operation. He told His servant, Hosea, to say that He would try another plan of working. The Law had failed, in that it was weak through the flesh, so He would use the Gospel—He would bring the Omnipotent power of love into the field! Our text a fortnight ago was, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart." And I sought, then, to set forth the strange ways in which God, with wondrous love, allures His people to Himself—how He draws them away from all their former confidences and hopes and brings them into a wilderness alone with Him. And there He must feed them, or they must die— there He must guide them, or they must hopelessly stray. And there He must be everything to them, or else they must be destroyed with a great destruction. When the

Lord, in love, brings His people to be alone with Him, then it is that He makes His promises come home to their hearts—and His person, His purposes, His ancient love and all the great preparations of that love as to the eternal future are laid home to the hearts of God's backsliding children—and they are made, again, to rejoice therein so that they are comforted. That was our subject, as you may remember.

Now we follow with this next verse which is intended to show yet more the goodness of God towards backsliders when they return to Him, or, if you like, towards sinners when, for the first time, they approach His feet. On this occasion I intend mainly to speak to those who have lost a sense of God's love. Perhaps there may have strayed in here some who were once professors, but they are not professors, now—some who were once members of a Christian Church, but no Christian Church would acknowledge them, now. Once they could, perhaps, speak to others in Christ's name, but they would be afraid to say a word for Jesus now, for they have gone far astray from Him. The message of infinite mercy to such people is, "Return, you backsliding children!" Come back, come home to your God! There is no other place of rest for you in the whole world—you will be as a bird that wanders from its nest. Sinners may rest content in their sin, for as yet they know no better, but you are disqualified even for that! You have so much knowledge still left and so much of conscience still remains that you are spoiled for this world, spoiled for the pleasures of sin, spoiled for all confidence except the one confidence which you used to have in Christ Jesus your Lord. There is no alternative for you but to return, for you cannot go elsewhere. Therefore, come home to your first Husband—that is God's own metaphor—for it was better with you then, than now!

Oh, that the blessed Spirit would now allure you, draw you apart, get you alone with Christ and speak comfortably to you! While He is doing that, permit me to tell you something, first, concerning *restored blessings.* "I will give her vineyards from there." Then, next, concerning *revived hopes.* "I will give her the Valley of Achor for a door of hope." And then, thirdly, concerning *renewed songs.* "She shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt."

I. First, then, let me talk to returning backsliders ABOUT RESTORED BLESSINGS.

You have lost a good deal by losing Christ. In fact, to your own consciousness, you have lost everything. All that made you joyous and glad has departed from you like a dream of the night—as a man awakes and finds himself in darkness—even so have you awakened from the brightness of that foolish dream of yours and you find yourself undone. Now come back to God, for in coming back you will have fulfilled to you the promise of our text—"I will give her vineyards from there."

By this is meant, first, that God *will give back to returning penitents that which He took away.* Read the 12th verse—"I will destroy her vines and her fig trees." Now the Lord says, "I will give her her vineyards from there." When you come back to Christ, the very things that were taken

away from you shall be restored to you! It is sometimes so even in *temporal* things. The rod is put aside when it has answered its purpose. Many a man has been kept poor, or sick, or grievously depressed in spirit until the time when he has heard the rod and Him that did appoint it. And then, when he has turned, again, to his God, he has once more prospered. I do not say that it is always so, for there may be other reasons why the affliction should continue, but I do say that it is often so in the experience of God's people. While they have gone astray, they have had affliction upon affliction—but when they have returned to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, He has made them to lie down in green pastures, beside the still waters. I am sure that it is so as to *spiritual* matters.

If you have backslidden, the House of God ministers no comfort to you now. When you come to it, it is no longer a home to you. But if you come back to the Lord, you shall find the same pleasure in the House of Prayer that you used to find in it. Now, perhaps, the Sabbath has become a weariness to you, for it does not bring you any holy joy—it only sounds the knell of your departed blessings. Come back to God and the Sabbath bell shall have all its silvery music restored and you shall wake up on the morning of the Lord's-Day and begin singing—

"Come, bless the Lord, whose love assigns
So sweet a rest for wearied minds;
Provides an antepast of Heaven,
And gives this day the food of seven."

You shall have the House of Prayer made none other than the House of God to you, and the first day of the week shall become to you the best of all the seven!

Possibly, also, you continue to read your Bible, but it appears to have lost all its former interest. You fall upon your knees and try to pray, but you do not meet with God. You associate with the Lord's people, but you find no charm in that communion which was once so hallowed—the very essence seems to have gone from every means of Grace. You go out in the morning, but there is no manna. The dews of Heaven are withheld, so no blessing comes to your spirit. Now, if you return to the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth—and His great love restores you to Himself—then all this shall come back to you! "I will give her her vineyards from there." Do not wait till all this blessing comes back and *then* return to Christ—do not try to put the effect before the cause! But come now, just as you are, in all your dullness and your deadness—come back to your first love and trust in Jesus as you did at the very beginning—for then the Lord will restore to you all the privileges that made your life so happy and bright.

Notice, next, that not only are these things which are restored to the backsliding nation those that were taken away, but *they are now made to be more hers than they were before.* Read again verse 12—"I will destroy her vines and her fig trees." Now God says, "I will give her *her* vineyards from there." She shall feel a peculiar possession about what she now has, for she shall see that there is a deed of gift by which God has again

given to her those mercies which she had lost. Oh, I do love to feel, when the Sabbath comes, that it is God's Day which He has hedged about for me! And when I go to the House of God to worship, I like to think that it is appointed for me there to draw near to God, to open His Book, and to feel that the Bible is my Father's letter to me, a gift from God to me—and that the Mercy Seat was the gift of Infinite Love and Divine Grace, prepared *on purpose* that I and others like I might come to it! How precious do even our common mercies become when we see them given back to us by a Father's hand! I reckon that there is no man who loves the means of Grace like the man who at one time felt them to be dry and barren. When the Lord fills the dry beds of the rivers with the torrents of His love, then we come and drink abundantly and we rejoice exceedingly. When, for a while, all outward means have seemed to become a wilderness to us, oh, how glad we are when, once again, the Lord appears, and puts life, and power, and efficacy into them, so that our soul rejoices in them! Poor Backslider, ask the Lord even at this moment to give you back all that you have lost and to make you feel that He is giving it to you by a double act of Grace and that, therefore, it is yours—you have a Covenant right to it and what He gives you is now your very own so that you will enjoy it to the fullest without any idea that you are presuming when you do so! Thus you will understand the meaning of God's gracious promise, "I will give her *her* vineyards from there."

Further, notice that when the Lord restores a backslider, *He does not withhold even the sweetest of His former blessings.* The Lord give him not only that which is necessary—that might be described as cornfields—but He gives that which tends to luxury, to joy, to exhilaration—"I will give her, her *vineyards.*" Vineyards are not necessary to the life of man, but God does not stint Himself in giving to His people barely bread and water, but He gives them things not absolutely necessary, that He may further increase their joys. He gives after a royal manner! The house of God's mercy is not a workhouse, where they weigh out so many ounces of bread—it is a banqueting house where the Lord, as King in Zion, makes His guests to rejoice as He distributes the riches of His Grace! "I will give her, her vineyards." Oh, listen, you who are now distressed! You shall not only have back your former peace of mind, but you shall have even joy in the Lord! You shall not merely be permitted to sit at the Lord's table and eat a little morsel, and then go your way hungering for more—but He will satiate your soul with goodness, He will make you to eat of fat things full of marrow and to drink of wines on the lees well refined!

Never imagine that the Lord will let in a poor backslider to a sort of second-rate Gospel feast, put him in the back rows and give him something less than he gives to his Brothers and Sisters. No, the prodigal's father killed for him the fatted calf which he had not killed even for the elder brother. And if you will come back to God, my wandering Friend, He will give to you the chief things which He has stored up, even the abundance of Infinite Love, till your heart shall leap within you and your life shall become a Psalm, and your whole being shall be as a harp upon

which the fingers of God shall play to bring out sweetest music henceforth and forever! Only return and you shall see what lies before you! Go on in your sin and your way shall become blacker and blacker—the pitfalls and snares shall multiply every step you take—and the darkness shall deepen into a tenfold night! But return unto your rest and the way shall become smoother beneath your feet, your heart shall grow stronger in the Lord, your ways shall be established and a new song shall be put into your mouth, even praise unto your God! Thus runs the promise, "I will give her her vineyards." She shall have all the mirth and all the joy that a ransomed spirit ought to know! Oh, what comfort there is in this to any who have wandered away from God, but who resolve to return to Him!

I want you also to notice, before I leave this first point, that it is said, "I will give her, her vineyards *from there,"* which means, I think, that God *gives these blessings in the wilderness into which He allures her.* He promises to give her her vineyards in the solitude into which He allures her when He takes her away from all her earthly trusts to be alone with Himself. And, mark you, the vineyards given, "from there," will be worth ten thousand of the world's vineyards! I mean, by this, that a joy which is found in Christ, alone, is true joy, one single particle of which will outweigh the joy of all the world besides! The joy that springs from the garden dies when the garden is dry, but the joy that is given in the wilderness is a root from a dry ground so it can never lose its moisture. It can never decay, for it is nourished from above, not from beneath. The joy that I get in the creature dies with the creature from which it comes, but the joy that comes from Christ the Creator is like He from whom it comes—it can never expire! "I will give her her vineyards from there," that is to say, I will fetch her gains from losses, her crowns from crosses and her sweet from sweat. I will bring her honey from a lion. I will bring her life from Christ's death. I will bring her Heaven from all His woes! "I will give her, her vineyards from there."

I should like everyone here, who is very happy, to be asking, "What is the secret of my joy? Am I rejoicing in the Lord? Or, is mine like the mirth of the ungodly that sustains itself on corn, wine, oil and on the abundance of these perishable things? Have I peace at this moment? Then, on what is my peace founded? Is it built on something which I can see, and taste, and handle of the world's goods? If so, it will fail me at the last! But if I get happiness that springs from Christ, my Lord, who has become everything to me, then I have a peace that I may grasp and hold fast in the article of death as well as in the trials of life! "I will give her, her vineyards from there." Come, poor Backslider, whatever your sad case—the Lord can give you joy in Himself! All the joy that your soul can hold, He can give you when alone with Himself. Poor Sinner, if you are sorely grieved with a sense of your sin, and if outward trials are pressing you very heavily, the Lord can give you joy that shall fill your heart to overflowing from Himself, alone, if you will but come to Him! He can give you the resolve to come—oh, that, with all your heart, you would now

seek His face and live in Him! May His blessed Spirit work this Grace in you, and to Him shall be all glory!

Many here well know what these vineyards are which the Lord gives to His returning people. I will tell you of some into which I have been, myself, and I wish to live in those vineyards all my days. One of them is access to God in prayer. The wanderer is shut out from God, he cannot come near to God in prayer. But when he returns to the Savior, he finds that the Mercy Seat is still open and he can speak with God as a man speaks with his friend. That is a vineyard bearing the sweetest clusters!

A second vineyard is that of communion with God—to feel that God dwells within us and we dwell in Him—that we are His children and that He is our Father always manifesting Himself to us. That is a glorious vineyard! If a man can but eat the fruit thereof, it will make him long to go into the hill country of Heaven where the best grapes are ripening for the perfected ones.

A third vineyard is that of full assurance of faith. May a backslider ever come back to that vineyard? Yes, that he may! If you, poor Wanderer, do so, you will be a happy man—not only to hope and to trust that you are saved, but to *know* it. And not only to know it, but to know it infallibly, to know it so that all the devils in Hell cannot shake your confidence that it is so—to know it by the witness of the Holy Spirit's inward sealing of the Truth of God to your soul. This is a blessed vineyard, indeed! God will give it to all those who truly come back to Him. And may those who have not wandered, often go and dwell amidst those sweet-smelling vines!

Yet another vineyard is usefulness. When backsliders return to the Lord, He condescends to employ them and honor them in bringing others to Himself. This is, indeed, to live in a vineyard where the grapes are very sweet to the palate, for surely, men can hardly have greater joy than that of leading others to the Savior's feet! And then, besides these vineyards, there are the manifestations of Christ to His own. There are openings up of the Word of God by the blessed Spirit. There are the tokens of Divine Love even in Providence in a thousand varied forms. I cannot tell you all the sweet and precious things—the joys unspeakable—which the Lord gives to His own people when they come back to Him and dwell with Him! Therefore, come back, poor Wanderer, and you shall find it out for yourself! And you who have never come, before, you, also, come by simple, humble faith, and the Lord will receive you graciously and bless you this night and forever!

So much, then, for the first part of my subject—restored blessings.

II. The second division of my discourse is this, REVIVED HOPES—"I will give her the Valley of Achor for a door of hope."

What was this Valley of Achor? It was *the place of their first victory over their enemies.* It was the first land upon which the Israelites entered after they crossed the Jordan and the walls of Jericho fell flat to the ground. Hard by the city of palm trees was the fertile Valley of Achor. If ever the Israelites were to go back, again, they must enter Palestine by the same door if they crossed the Jordan at all—the key of the position was the

Valley of Achor, the first region of which they would have to take possession if they wished to win the rest of the land.

And, surely, the spiritual meaning of the metaphor is this—*the Lord will give to backsliders, when they return to Him, a renewed realization of His Grace*—the old joyous feelings, the consciousness of their first love coming back, their first simple faith being revived. This taking possession, again, of that which was theirs at the first, shall be to them, "a door of hope," that they shall, in time, take possession of the land! I tell you, Brothers and Sisters, it is a very blessed thing to get back to our first days. We may have better days than our first ones if we go on and make the progress God desires for us, but though they may be, in some respects, deeper and fuller, yet I do not know whether we do not all look back upon the first days of our conversion with very fond memories and some regrets. Other days have become indistinct, like coins in general circulation, but, as far as I am concerned, that first day of my spiritual life is, in my memory, as clear, fresh and sharp as when it first came from the mint of time! Oh, the bliss of that first joy when Jesus told me I was His and my Beloved was mine! That first moment of rest when the burden rolled off my shoulders—I will never forget it! I cannot help remembering it at this moment. And it is a very sweet way of putting it, that the Lord will give you back that first Valley into which you then came—that Valley of Achor where first you set your foot—and you shall feel, again, as you felt then!

To use another figure—though now you are covered with leprosy, your flesh shall be, again, to you as the flesh of a little child—you shall feel as if you were *beginning your spiritual life over again.* That shall be to you, "a door of hope," for you shall say to yourself, "Surely, the Lord means mercy to me. He has led me back to the very spot where He blessed me at first! He has made me feel just as I felt, then, and He has brought me to the same simplicity of faith which I exercised in the young dawning of my spiritual life. Therefore am I persuaded that He means, now, to lead me on from strength to strength that, as I capture Achor, I may capture all the rest of the land and all the blessings of the Covenant may be mine." Listen to this, Backslider! Pluck up heart of hope! May God help you to do so and to come back to Him, for He will give you that Valley of Achor to be a door of hope!

But we cannot help remembering that *the name of that Valley of Achor signifies trouble.* You have only to look in the margin of your Bible, at Joshua 7:26, and you will find that it was the Valley of Trouble, and the trouble came in this way—when the walls of Jericho fell flat to the ground, there was one Achan, or Achar, or *Achor*, who took some of the spoil which was all to have been either dedicated to God or else destroyed. Before the children of Israel could have God's blessing, they had to clear themselves from the guilt of this accursed thing. They went out to battle and were defeated at Ai. Then there had to be a searching and a digging—and at last they found the godly Babylonian garment and the two hundred shekels of silver, and the wedge of gold. And then they took Achan, and all that he had, and brought them into the Valley of Achor—

and destroyed and burned them—and buried them under a great heap of stones. That Valley of Achor was, indeed, a Valley of Trouble, but after Joshua and all Israel had purged themselves from the evil, it became a door of hope to them!

So, dear Friends, when you and I began our spiritual life, it was not long before our joy was marred. Sin was still in our heart and, before long, it broke out. There are many poor sinners who want to find peace, who seem to me to be searching their hearts exactly the wrong way—they are seeking for any good thing there may be in them—but that is a sheer waste of time! The proper thing to do is to search your heart for the *bad* things that are in you—to do as Israel did in the case of Achan when they cast lots that God's will might be known and that His Spirit might reveal the criminal. And then go and dig until you turn up the evil and find the accursed thing. "Why, Sir!" you say, "I can already see quite enough of my sins." Can you? I think that the fault of most sinners is that they do not see half enough of their sin. "Oh, but," you cry, "I see enough to drive me to despair!" I wish you saw enough to drive you to *double* despair, for when a man heartily and thoroughly despairs of himself, then will he begin to hope in Christ! But many men try to find out some good thing in themselves and they dig all over the camp to discover something of great price. Believe me, there is not a grain of pure gold in all your mines! There is not anything worth the finding in all Israel's camp! Dig as long as you may, you will only dig out the evil thing on which God's curse is resting!

There is many a sinner who cannot find the door of hope because he is holding on to some evil thing. There is, for instance, the man who is clinging to strong drink—he never can have peace with God when, perhaps, only once in six months can he walk home in an upright fashion. He cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils! There is another man who is practicing some secret sin. I dare not say what it is, but he knows. Yet he says that he is trying to find peace with God. Ah, Sir, you will never obtain it while you cling to that iniquity! You must cut off the evil thing, even if it is your right arm! You must pluck it out, even if it is your right eye! Here is a person who does something in business that he ought not to do—and here is another man who omits to do what he knows that he ought to do. They think that God will make peace with them on *their* terms, but He makes no terms with sinners unless they will part with their sins and trust in Christ alone! God will not save you and let you save your pet sin—that cannot be! The place in which a man shall honestly give up every willful act and thought of sin and, by the help of God's Spirit, shall quit everything which is revealed to him to be evil, shall be to him a door of hope! The place where he troubles himself because of his sin, where his conscience frets and worries over it. The place where he puts away the sin and buries it—and piles stones upon it because he abhors it—that is the place where God shall come and manifest Himself to him in the fullness of His Grace! "I will give her the Valley of Achor for a door of hope." The place of Grace and the place of purging,

the place of chastisement and the place of turning away from sin—this is the place that shall become the backslider's door of hope!

Now, Beloved, we will not spend all our time in talking about the door and forget what the hopes are, but who can describe the hopes that come trooping through that door? The hope of being kept, preserved and sustained through every struggle of this life's campaign—the hope of entering into eternal rest with Christ—the hope of the resurrection from among the dead—the hope of infinite glory for body and soul with Christ, world without end—all those hopes which your backsliding has cast away shall come back to you! And, filled with hope, your spirit shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

III. I have but a minute or two to dwell upon the last point, whereon one might well speak for an hour—that is, RENEWED SONGS.

You must have noticed, dear Friends, that *whenever men turn aside from Christ, they go away from all the music of true religion.* A little religion is a very miserable thing! If you have just enough religion to let you know that you are wrong, but not enough to make you right, you are spoiled for the joys of the world, yet you do not possess the joys of the *world to come*. I cannot help telling you again the old American story about the apples in the orchard. There is said to have been a gentleman who asked a friend to come and have some of his apples, which he said were among the finest apples in the State. Yet his friend did not come, though he was invited several times. The gentleman thought that there must be some reason for his refusal, so he asked him why he did not come, and his friend answered, "The fact is, while I have been driving by your orchard, I have picked up an apple or two that fell into the road and I can't say that I have, at all, pleasant memories of those apples—they were the sourest that I ever ate in my life! They set my teeth on edge even to think of them." "Oh," said the owner of the orchard, "now I understand! I sent a great many miles to buy those particular apples that grow just by the side of the hedge and fall into the road. I bought them for the special benefit of the boys who might be inclined to steal my fruit. Whenever they taste them, they say to themselves, 'It is no use to rob that orchard, the apples are horribly sour.' But," he added, "if you will come inside, where those boys do not come, you shall then see what a good apple is like."

So is it with religion. All along the outside of the hedge, where those people come who have just a little religion, the fruit is as sour as it can be—repentance that needs to be repented of—and that gripes the very spirit of the man who has it. There are plenty of those things on the outside, but you have no idea of the luscious sweetness of the fruits that grow in the center—and these shall be yours if you come back to the Master and give yourself up wholly to Him! And the result will be that you will again begin to sing!

"*She shall sing*," says the text. She shall not be able to talk out her joys, she shall feel that she must sing! "She shall sing *there*." That is, in the wilderness, alone with Christ. "She shall sing there." "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice,

and blossom as the rose." "She shall sing there, *as in the days of her youth.*" Youth is the time for singing! Young converts are usually full of song and if we return to our Lord, after having backslidden from Him, we shall get back the songs of our spiritual childhood as well as all the other good things that were with us when first we knew the Lord. Ah, poor Wanderer, if you come back to Christ, you shall relish, again, the hymns that you began to despise when you acquired that fine taste that some have which scorns the precious things that please God's humble people. I know some who have become so lofty and proud that the Gospel is not good enough for them—they want something much more refined to suit their precious wisdom and their wonderful culture! Yes, but when the Lord puts them on short commons for a while and whips them well for their ill manners, they are glad to get back to the simple hymns and to the elementary Truths of God they once loved. You know how dear, good Dr. Guthrie, when he was dying, wanted those around him to sing him a child's hymn and, in another sense, when the children of God are spiritually reviving, they always want to have the hymns that were good for them when they were in their spiritual childhood.

The text further says, "She shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, *and as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.*" I read you that song—oh, that our hearts might time to its tune! May we come back to the Lord so perfectly that we shall be able to say, "Let us sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously." May we see so much of His conquest of our sin that we may magnify His name and exalt in Him! May we take Him so wholly to be ours that we may say again, "He is my God and I will prepare Him an habitation. He is my father's God, and I will exalt Him." I want you who have gone back from God, to get such a renewed hold on Him that you will not know how to make enough of Him and not know how sufficiently to praise and land and magnify that infinite love which has brought you, as it were, through the very depths of the sea and landed you safely on the other side! Oh, come, let us sing unto the Lord! If your feet may not dance, yet let your heart dance! And if you need no timbrel, as you are not under the old dispensation in which such instruments were allowable, yet let your fingers seem to beat the heavenly tunes! Let your whole being praise and glorify the Lord who has brought you back from the land of your captivity! If you blessed Him when you first came to Him, bless Him yet more, now that you are allowed to come to Him for the second time! If you praised Him when first you plunged in the fountain filled with blood, oh, bless Him still more, now that He comes and washes your feet which have wandered so far from Him. If the first homecoming was with music and dancing, what shall the second homecoming be?—

"Angels, assist our mighty joys."

Rejoice with us over Brothers and Sisters who were dead and are alive again—over lost ones that are now found! So may it be! Poor Wanderers, do come home, do come home! "The door is shut," you say. Who shut it? Certainly not the Father, for He has sent His Son to be the open Door for all who will come unto Him! Christ Himself invites you to return! The

Spirit is given to draw you back to God and if you have never come before, come now! Oh, that you might be persuaded to come, ere yet you leave this House of Prayer, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HOSEA 2:14, 15; EXODUS 15:1-21.
[Exposition was always *before* the sermon.—EO]

You remember that, a fortnight ago, we read the second chapter of the prophecy of Hosea, and I preached from the 14th verse. I am going to continue that subject tonight, so we will read two verses of the same chapter over again. I am sure we shall never exhaust it and you will not be weary of hearing it. We will begin with the text from which I then spoke to you.

Hosea 2:14, 15. *Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor for a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.* Now I want you to hear how she did sing in the days of her youth, in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. Turn to the 15th Chapter of the Book of Exodus, where we have the joyful song of the emancipated chosen nation.

Exodus 15:1-10. *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spoke, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He thrown into the 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. He is my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host has He cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power: Your right hand, O LORD, has dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of Your excellency You have overthrown them that rose up against You: You sent forth Your wrath which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of Your nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. 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. You did blow with Your wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.* They were all noise, bluster and boast, but observe the sublime attitude of God, how readily He eased Himself of His adversaries—"You did blow with Your wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters."

11-14. *Who is like unto You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? You stretched out Your right hand, the earth swallowed them. You in Your mercy have led forth the people which You have redeemed: You have guided them in Your strength unto Your holy habitation. The people shall hear and be afraid:*

sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine. That is, the heathen nations who, at that time, inhabited the land of Palestine. "Sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine."

15. *Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.* This great deed of God would be told, and told again, all over Palestine. And the inhabitants would feel that their end was come, for who could stand against Israel's mighty God?

16. *Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of Your arm they shall be as still as a stone; till Your people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which You have purchased.* And how still they were! All the 40 years that the Israelites were in the wilderness, they were scarcely ever attacked. And even then it was not by the inhabitants of Canaan, but by the wandering Bedouin tribe of the Amalekites, who slew the hindmost of them. It was amazing that no troops ever came from Egypt to molest God's people after the destruction at the Red Sea. Neither from Canaan did any come to block their way. When God strikes, He makes His adversaries dread all future conflicts!

17-21. *You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which You have made for You to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O LORD, which Your hands have established. The LORD shall reign forever and ever. 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, but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, 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! The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.* They sang as in an oratorio, Miriam singing the solo, and all the women joining in the jubilant chorus! And well might they rejoice after the great deliverance which the Lord had worked for them.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—709, 548, 34 (VERSION II).

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JESUS SITTING ON THE WELL
NO. 2570

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 15, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 25, 1883.

"Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour."
John 4:6.

IF we were wise, dear Friends, we would find a thousand things in the world to remind us of our blessed Lord. It is well to form the habit of connecting things that are seen with Him, "whom, having not seen, we love." If we do so, there will not be an hour in the day when we shall not be helped to think of Him and scarcely anything that we see in our trade, or in the street, or in the field, or in our house which will not be the means of reminding us of Him. When we rise in the morning, would it not be well to think of how He rose a great while before day that He might have time for private prayer? He had a hard day's work before Him and, therefore, He needed strength with which to do it. And He gained it, not by a longer sleep, but by stealing time from sleep in which to draw near the strengthening Father in prayer! Even when the morning is ended and we come to the middle of the day, if we are hot and weary and the sun scorches us, we shall do well to think of our text, "Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well."

When the clock strikes three, Christians should not forget that it was about that hour when He yielded up the ghost and passed away. When it comes to eventide and we go to our comfortable bed, or to our hard pallet, as the case may be, would it not be sweet to remember Him who said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head"? The whole world might constitute a system of helps to memory if we were but wise enough to use it so. The stars speak of Him to those who have but ears to hear. The morning sun reveals Him and even the setting of the sun is not without instruction concerning Him. As God is everywhere, so are the footprints of the Only-Begotten. He has so taken up materialism into connection with His spiritual and Divine Nature that He has left His impress upon all materialism and in His temple of Creation everything speaks of His Glory!

Our second observation shall be how truly Human was the Lord Jesus Christ! Nowadays, we do not have to insist much upon that because it is not often denied—we have to fight for His Deity, but not often for His Humanity. Perhaps it is none the better for us that it is so. You know

that there were some, soon after the Apostle John's days, who denied that Christ took upon Himself a real body. They believed that He existed as a phantom. I will not go into the philosophical way in which they put it, but their main attack was against the Humanity of the Son of God. Now, times have changed and men admit that He existed and they admit His Humanity—yes, they so much admit it that they deny that He was anything more than Man! We must fight against that thrice-accursed doctrine as long as we have any being, but we must not forget how truly Human Jesus was. How really Human He appears when the burning sun smites Him, the sweat rolls off Him and He is thoroughly weary! And, being weary, He must do what we do when we are tired and worn-out—He must sit down. And the sun is so hot that He thirsts—He is parched with heat and there is the water in the well, but He has nothing to draw with, so He must sit there in the heat and bear the thirst.

You remember also, dear Friends, how He hungered. You will never forget how "Jesus wept." You all know how He suffered and how, at last, He died. Treasure up in your mind and heart the assured fact that Christ was most really and truly Man—and though the Godhead was most mysteriously united to His Manhood—He was none the less completely and intensely Man. Because He was perfectly and supremely God, His Godhead did not take away from Him His power to suffer and to be wearied.

It seems rather singular, but it is worthy of notice that our Lord appears to have been more weary than His disciples were, for they had gone away into the city to buy food. I suppose that He might have gone with them if He had not been more fatigued than they were. He was quite worn out and thoroughly weary, and so, while they went into Sychar to purchase provisions, He sat down on the well. I take it that, in all probability, the reason is this—He had mental weariness associated with His bodily fatigue—and when the two things come together, they make a man wearied, indeed. I know that there are some who fancy that to think and to care for others, to preach and to teach, is not much of work. Well, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I can assure you that you may keep on working much longer with your arms than you can with your brain! And I am speaking from experience when I say that careful thought and great anxiety to do good bring much wear and tear with them to a man's whole constitution. And if the life is taken out of a man in two ways at once—by fatigue of body and by fatigue of mind, too—then you will see that such a man will necessarily be the first to give way. The disciples had little to do but to follow implicitly as their Master led them. He had to be the Leader and upon the leader comes the strain and stress of thought and care. No man knows what were the cares that agitated the great heart of Christ. Surely, in one sense, He *never* rested—He was constantly thinking, not only of the twelve, but of all those who were with Him. And not merely of them, but it was as He said in His great intercessory prayer, "Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word." All Believers had a share in His thoughts of love even then, for He was bent upon no less a mission than the salvation of a countless number who shall be His in the day of His appearing!

His mind and heart were always at work. That busy brain of His was never still, so I do not wonder that though the disciples could go into the city to buy food, their Master could not go, but He must sit down on the well. "Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well"—in a thoroughly exhausted condition. He sat down as if He could go no further, could do no more—and there it was that the Samaritan woman found Him. How perfectly human all this proves our Lord to have been!

I want you, while we are speaking of that fact, to admire the great self-constraint which our Divine Master put upon Himself in bearing weariness, because, although He was Man and could be weary, I have also reminded you that He was God and, therefore, He could have refreshed Himself if it had been right for Him to do so. According to the Divine order of things, it would not have been right. When our Lord was in the wilderness 40 days, He hungered. Why did He not turn the stones into bread? He certainly could have done so, but to do so was evidently quite out of order with Him who had come to be a Servant and to suffer as a Man. The devil tempted Him to do it, which proves to us that it would have been wrong for Christ to do it. But, only think—if you and I were hungry and we could turn stones into bread—would we not do it? If we were weary and could immediately give ourselves the rest we required, would we not do so? Why, I think the water would have been glad to leap out of the well to refresh the lips of Him who had created it! That well would have been honored by suddenly pouring forth all its liquid refreshment that He might drink and be satisfied, but Jesus never worked a miracle merely for His own comfort. He felt that His miraculous power was to be used for others in His great work, but as for Himself, His Humanity must bear its own infirmity, it must support its own trials—so He keeps His hands back from relieving His own necessities. Oh, I never imagined how strong Christ was till I saw His love hold back His Deity! That Omnipotence which restrains Omnipotence—it cannot be something more than Omnipotence and yet, in a sense, it must be! The Love of Christ restrains the Omnipotence of Christ! He might have broken through all the infirmities of manhood, but He must not do so if He is to be perfectly bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—and He does not do it. He bears exhaustion, He bears deprivation of comfort, He bears, in fact, the very curse of labor which our father Adam brought upon us, that in the sweat of our brow we should eat our bread—and He bears it still with a magnanimity of condescension which cannot be imitated. It is far beyond our conception and infinitely beyond our venturing to follow this. We can only admire and adore. We worship You, O Son of God, that for our sins You could even deign to be wearied and to sit thus on the well!

Another thought I put before you is this. Behold the wonderful sympathy of the Lord Jesus Christ with us. You have been on a very long journey, and your feet are tired and you are weary and worn—you could not go a step further. Now Christ, in the days of His flesh, was like you. He knows what is meant by all that heaviness and heat of the feet, that blis-

tering of the soles, that drawing of the sinews, that testing of every muscle! And the next time you go a long tramp and sit down because you are weary, think to yourself, "He who is at the right hand of God remembers when He felt as I do, and He sympathizes with me in this, my present distress." Or take it to be another case, that your daily work is very hard—and I know that I speak to many who earn their bread with very severe toil and labor—and when the hour, at last, comes (alas! alas! how late it often is!) when the shop can be closed, or when your work is finished, you are thoroughly exhausted. You can scarcely crawl up to your bed, you feel so weary. It is often so with you and getting to be more often so, now that you are growing old and years are telling upon your once stalwart frame. Well, the next time you sit down, say to yourself, "Jesus, my Lord, You know all about this and You can pity Your poor servant, and help and comfort me as I have to bear it."

Do you not remember the story about Alexander's soldiers? When they went on long, forced marches, they, none of them, grew weary because although Alexander had a horse, he never rode. He said, "No, not while one man walks shall Alexander ride." So he tramped side by side with them and once, when a cup of water was brought for the king, he said, "There is a soldier who looks more faint than I am; pass it over to him." And every man felt strong because of that sympathy. Now, you who toil, think of Him who is the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the Prince of the kings of the earth—and for your comfort read the text again—"Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well."

Yes, but there are other kinds of toilers beside these. There are holy workers who, I think, ought to have a drink of water out of this well. You try and speak for Christ, or you go about and visit—you are very earnest to bring sinners to Jesus and, sometimes, you feel as if you could not do any more. You have not succeeded, perhaps, and you are disappointed and heart-weary. Well, when you are so, say to yourself, "My Lord knows all about His servant. 'Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well.'" Or, perhaps, your weariness comes of suffering. The pain is very sharp, you get very little rest, it seems to you as if all night long you had never slept. You steal a little sleep and when you wake again, in the morning, you feel more tired than when you went to bed. And sometimes you say to yourself, "I am so weary and worn. Will these pains never end? Is there no release from this, my chain? Must I always drag it with me?" But when you fall back upon the pillow, oh so weary—and some of us know all about this weariness, for we have many times felt as if we could not even breathe, or lift a finger—remember, then, "Jesus being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well." Oh, the deep sympathy of Christ! He knows it, not only by having heard of it, and seen it, but by having *felt* it. Go to Him without any fear, with a childlike confidence that He who has been tried in all points like as we are, and who was, Himself, compassed with infirmity, is able to succor us in all times of weariness! And be assured that if we come to Him, He will give us rest.

I am just getting into my sermon, now—all these observations which I have made are only preliminary, but the discourse, itself, will be a short one.

First, dear Friends, if I have, here, a weary sinner who longs to find rest, I want *his conscience to paint a picture.* And after his conscience has painted it, I want *his faith to come and study it.* And when that has been done, I want *his gratitude and his love to remove that picture and to paint another.*

I. First, then, I want every conscience here that is awakened, but has never been quieted by the blood of Christ, to PAINT A PICTURE—and that picture is the portrait of a wearied Savior, a Savior wearied by you, worn out by you—wearied, not with His journey, but *wearied with your sin.*

"Can that be?" someone asks. Yes, the Lord has said it in Isaiah. "You have wearied Me with your iniquities." You have wearied Christ by doing wrong and doing it again and again, and sinning against conscience and against light. You are wearying my Lord, my loving Lord! In the Book of Amos He says, "I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." You know how they heap the sheaves on till the wagon creaks and the axle is ready to break—do you treat my Lord like an old wagon and load on your sins, sheaf upon sheaf, till He can bear no more? He says that it is so with some of you and I want you to paint the picture of a wearied Christ, wearied with your sin.

Perhaps in the case of some of you Christ is *wearied with your religion.* "Wearied with our religion?" asks one. When you get home, will you read the first chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah and you will see there how God declares Himself to be tired of the empty formalism of the people? "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me. The new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure. It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates: they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them." It was a weariness to Him and, if you pray, but do not pray sincerely, my Lord will be tired of hearing your mockery of prayer! If you go to sacraments, or come to public worship and think that this will save you, my Lord will be weary of you, for it is all a sham! There is a shell, but there is no kernel. You mock Him with the solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue. You sit as His people sit and your minds are far away on the mountains of vanity. You hear, you join in the hymn and listen to the prayer, but there is no true worship, praise, or supplication. I tell you, Sirs, my Lord is getting weary of you—getting sick and tired of your religion! What a picture! Christ wearied with sin and wearied with dead religion!

I fear that I might also say that there are some here of whom Christ is *weary because of their broken promises.* When they were sick, they said, "We will repent if the Lord will spare our lives." They vowed, when they were in danger, that they would turn to Him if He delivered them—but nothing of the kind has happened. My dear Friend, you are still here undecided! Twelve months ago you would not have believed that another

year would have passed and found you just where you are. The wheels of time are running round swiftly as flames of lightning, but you make no advance whatever! On the contrary, I am afraid that you are going backward. My Lord is getting wearied of your excuses and your procrastination! "You have lied to Me," says the Lord, and He will not always endure this treatment from you.

With some, my Lord is getting *weary because of their resistance to His Spirit.* Remember that God said of some who rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." He shall not always be put to the indignity of striving with men who resist Him, as did their fathers. When holy thoughts arise, you quench them—and you have done this, oh, so long! How many years has this been the case with some of you? If some persons whom I know are provoked for only five minutes, their anger boils over. If they stood to be insulted for half-an-hour, they would count it a miracle! I know some with whom it is "a word and a blow" and, often, the blow comes faster than the word! But only think of anyone having lived to provoke God for five years, 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, 40 years! Shall I go further? I believe that there are some here who have outdone the Israelites in the wilderness, for they provoked God 40 years, but these people have provoked Him 50, sixty, or even 70 years!

My Lord is weary! My Lord is weary! You remember, when He grew weary with the Israelites, He lifted His hand to Heaven and swore that they should not enter into His rest. What was the sin that shut them out? "So then," says the Apostle, "they could not enter in because of unbelief." Christ will not always be quibbled at, nor have His promises belied, nor His sweet invitations cast behind your backs. He is getting very tired and very weary of you—and I fear that He will one day say, "I will ease Me of My adversaries." Be thankful that He has not said it, yet, and turn to Him with true repentance and faith!

But there is the picture and to me it is a very pitiful picture, to see Jesus sitting down by the well of Eternal Life, wearied by men whom He came to bless.

II. Now I want you to STUDY THAT PICTURE of the wearied Christ.

Look closely at it—not merely with the eyes of your conscience, but with the eyes of faith—and if you have not any, I must try to lend you mine. For a few minutes I must believe for you, in the hope that what I tell you—and know to be true—God the Holy Spirit may enable you to believe, too, that you may, yourselves, spiritually see. Yes, I can see Jesus Christ, very weary, sitting on the well. Let me look at Him a while. I like the picture so, it seems to comfort me as I look at the well, for, albeit that He is very weary, yet I perceive that *He is waiting.* He sits on the well, for there is a woman coming—a poor fallen woman—and He is waiting to bless her. She ought to have been here early in the morning, and it is now twelve o'clock. The sun has reached its zenith and is shining at its hottest. The woman will be here soon. Jesus is very weary, but He still waits. Sinner, that is just the attitude of my Lord towards you! You say you cannot see Him—you have not the eyes of faith, but I can see Him. I remember when I first saw Him that He had long been waiting for Me. He

waits to be gracious. He is in no hurry, He allows the sinner time, wicked though the spending of that time is on the sinner's part—but Christ spends that time in patiently waiting.

I must look again at the picture. As I look, I can see that He is not only waiting, but He *is watching.* I can see that He is turning His eyes toward the city gate. "She will be out very soon," He says to Himself. "She must come here and I know that she is coming." He is not looking round at the scenery. That is not the chief thing to Him, just now—He is looking for this poor soul that is coming. Oh, my dear Friend, though you have wearied Christ, yet He is still waiting and watching for you! There is many an elect soul that my Lord is spying out over there in the first gallery, or up there in those boxes almost in the roof, or down below in that area! And Jesus is waiting and watching for them.

Now I must look again, for my Lord, though He is very weary, has at last spied out the person for whom He is waiting and watching. Here she comes! And now I perceive *how willing He is.* His heart seems to beat more quickly, His eyes are brighter than usual, He is not half as weary as He was. You may have seen the faint and tired hunter suddenly grow strong when, at last, he spies on the crag, the deer he has come to seek. Or the fisherman standing wearily in the stream, holding his rod, but ready to go home to his long-needed meal, but, at last, the salmon begins to part away at his line—now how strong a man he is! He will go on for an hour at that work and he will not need to eat or drink. The whole of his being is in the fishing. So was it with my blessed Master. That woman was coming and Christ was "all there," as we say. He was ready to speak the right words—a word in season to one who was weary—to speak the word of admonition, or of comfort, or of invitation. And He is "all here" at this moment. I thought, when I stood here tonight, to speak to you, "I am constantly coming to the Tabernacle to talk to this great throng," and something seemed to say to me, "You ought to be glad to have such an opportunity!" I thought, "Yes, and I *am* glad, and I will try my very best to preach Christ to them as long as this tongue can move, for it is a delightful privilege to be allowed to tell men about my Master's pardoning love." But, oh, if He were here in bodily Presence, He would do it so much better than any of us can, for His heart is so much more full of love than our poor hearts are!

He was at the well, waiting, and watching, and willing. And though He was very weary, yet, when the woman came to Him and she believed His message, *He saved her right away.* A weary Christ is most willing to save a weary sinner! Though He was tired, yet He could save that great sinner and now, exalted in the highest heavens, though you have wearied Him with your sins, yet He will blot out those sins, even now, the moment you put your trust in Him! And even with His weary hands He will wipe away your transgressions. He is, in fact, so weary with your sins that He will put them away, that He and you, too, may never be wearied with them again! He is so sick of your wanderings that He will end them and receive you into His heart, that you may never wander again!

This picture looked very sad when I saw it at a distance and when you saw it with the eyes of your conscience, but, oh, if you can put on the blessed glasses of faith and see it as I have tried to describe it, the picture grows very lovely! "Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well"—waiting, watching, willing and able to save—yes, to so save the woman as to make her the means of saving others! And, maybe He will now save you who have wearied Him, and start you at once to bringing others to Him. I shall not be surprised if it is so! I shall be concerned if it does *not* happen, for we have sought it at His hands and we expect to have it!

III. Now I want to ALTER THE PICTURE ON THE CANVAS.

I suppose I have not an artist here who can help me with his brush. I want to take a little out and put a little in, for the new picture is to be a portrait of the weary Savior sitting on the well, refreshed by the very sinner who had helped to weary Him! A woman must be put into the picture now, Mr. Painter. There she is and the Master is saying to her, "Give Me a drink." And did she do it? She did not dip her water pot into the well, but did she give Him a drink? Yes, that she did! I am sure she refreshed Him even more than she would have done by a draught of water, because when the disciples came back to their Master, He said to them, "I have meat to eat that you know not of," so that He had evidently been refreshed. And how was it done? Why, by that woman! What had she given Him which had so refreshed Him?

Well, first, *she had put to Him various enquiries.* She began asking Him a number of questions and the Lord Jesus Christ is always refreshed when He meets with enquirers. If you only want to know all you can about Christ, that will be some sort of refreshment to Him, for the mass of men pass by Him with indifference, so that He has to say—

"Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?
Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?"

I am sure that my Master will be glad if some of you will begin to enquire, as the woman did, "Are You greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well?" Or, "From where, then, have You that living water?" I do not mind even if your question is a foolish one, because that will only show the state of mind you are in—and Christ can cure the foolishness and give you wisdom. Read the New Testament carefully. Go down on your knees and say, "Lord, teach me what the meaning of this passage is." You will thus refresh my Master's heart and I shall expect to see you, before long, among the saved!

Next, *this woman refreshed the Savior's heart with prayer,* for when she had asked Him questions, she prayed in her poor way, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw." She hardly knew what she said, but, as far as she knew *anything*, she meant to ask Jesus to give her what He had to give! Dear Heart, may the Lord help you to begin to pray even now! The Master's spirit will be wonderfully refreshed by your supplication. He will have a deep draught of cold water from the well when He gets to hear your voice in prayer. "Take with you words," says the Prophet Hosea," and turn to the Lord. Say to Him, Take away all

our iniquity and receive us graciously." If one poor soul in this Tabernacle, far away at the back, there, who cannot see, and perhaps can hardly hear, is moved to pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner," that petition will touch the heart of the Son of God! Even on the Throne of the highest heavens, He will be refreshed—He always is when He hears a sinner pray!

But, further, this woman not only prayed, but *she confessed her sin.* The confession was not very explicit, but she acknowledged that what the Lord laid to her charge was true. "Sir," she said "I perceive that You are a Prophet." And to the men of the city she said, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that ever I did." A hearty confession to God, while it is good for your soul, is good for Christ's soul, too—He gets refreshed thereby.

Best of all, *this woman believed in Jesus.* When He said that He was the Christ, she accepted His declaration as true and, therefore, she said to the men of the city, "Is not this the Christ?" O my Lord, You will again see of the travail of Your soul and You will be once more satisfied if some poor sinner does but receive You! Does not a mother rejoice when, after her pangs, she fixes her eyes upon her first-born child? That is the very picture that Isaiah drew of the Lord Jesus Christ—"He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Oh, to think that you and I can give satisfaction to the heart of Christ for all the anguish that He bore when He poured out His soul unto death! That is no metaphor of mine—it is a Scriptural symbol! I have only given you what the Holy Spirit, Himself, has said and, oh, dear Friends, I do pray that some of you may thus gratify, satisfy, refresh, invigorate, delight and glorify the Christ who now, though He reigns on high, has never forgotten that He did once sit on the well and thirst! And while He so thirsted, saved a Samaritan sinner and found Himself refreshed in the doing of it!

God bless you, Beloved, and bring you to the Savior, for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 4:1-29.

I have often read this chapter in your hearing and you have often read it yourselves, but the Word of God is not like the grapes of an earthly vine which, when once trodden, are exhausted. You may come to Holy Scripture again and again—it is like an ever-flowing fountain—the more you draw from it, the more you may draw.

Verses 1-3. *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples), He left Judaea and departed again into Galilee.* Observe, here, that our Lord at first shunned conflict with the Pharisees. When He knew that they were jealous of Him, He went away from Judaea to a more remote district, "into Galilee." May He help us always to take that which may be the wiser course in every emergency! He was not guilty of cowardice—that He could not be—for He was the bravest of the brave, but sometimes it will be most courageous

on our part to shun a conflict. When you believe it is right to do so, never mind what anybody may say, but do as your Master did on this occasion.

4. *And He must go through Samaria.* It is true that it was the nearest way, yet He might have gone round about. But He would not do so, for there were souls in Samaria who were to be blessed by His Presence. He had a constraint upon Him, an inward impulse, so that, "He must go through Samaria." Dear Friends, whenever you feel the drawings of the Spirit in any particular direction, do not resist them, but yield yourself entirely to His gracious influence, even as your Lord did.

5, 6. *Then He came to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.* About twelve o'clock, in the middle of the day, at high noon. You will observe, dear Friends, that our Lord spoke to Nicodemus at night, but when He was about to talk to a fallen woman, alone, He did it in the middle of the day. There is a time for everything—so let those who serve God be careful as to the best time of their service. Our Lord had a tender delicacy about Him which led Him instinctively to do the right thing at the right time.

7. *There came a woman of Samaria to draw water.* That was not the usual time for drawing water. Women generally went to the well in the morning and in the evening, but this poor fallen creature was not one with whom other women would associate, so she came alone, at the hour when the sun was hottest—and when nobody else would likely to be there.

7. *Jesus said unto her, Give Me a drink.* This was quite a natural way of beginning a conversation and they will best touch other people's minds and hearts who do not harshly *interject* religion, but who wisely *introduce* it, leading up to it with a holy dexterousness such as our Lord always exhibited. He begins not with any remarks about the woman's life, or her sin, or even about His great salvation, but with the simple request, "Give Me a drink."

8, 9. *(For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy food). Then said the woman of Samaria unto Him, How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.* But our Lord did not come to maintain these distinctions of race and caste. It is altogether foreign to the spirit of Christianity for nationalities to be despised! We sometimes hear people say of a person, "Oh, he is only a So-and- So!" mentioning some nation that happens to be in the background. Christ was cosmopolitan! He loved men of every nation, tribe, tongue and people. To Him there was neither Jew nor Samaritan—all such distinctions were banished from His mind. The woman might well say what she did, but her words would have sounded strangely out of place from the lips of Christ.

10, 11. *Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me a drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water. The woman said unto Him, Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from where,*

then, have You that living water? Holy knowledge is very advantageous—it often is the means of breeding prayer. "If you knew...you would have asked, and He would have given." Therefore, Beloved, let us teach the Truth of God to all who come in our way, for it may be that we, too, shall meet with many of whom it can be said that if they know what the gift of God is, they will ask for it—and if they ask for it, Christ will give it to them.

12. *Are You greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?* Ah, she did not know how infinitely superior Jesus was to Jacob! There could be no comparison between the two. Jesus is the true Father of all Israel and, in that respect, He is like Jacob, but He is immeasurably greater than "father Jacob."

13, 14. *Jesus answered and said unto her, Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* Hence he will always be content. He who has Divine Grace in his heart is a happy man—he grows more and more satisfied with the Grace as it wells up increasingly in living power in his character and life. Oh, if you have never received that Living Water, may God give it to you now! You shall never regret receiving it, and you shall rejoice over it forever!

15. *The woman said unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw.* Up till now she has not imbibed a single idea from Christ. The Lord has spoken to her in parables, but she has not seen through the thin veil, so she has missed His meaning. Now He fires another shot and deals with her in another fashion.

16-18. *Jesus said unto her, Go, call your husband, and come here. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, You have well said, I have no husband, for you have had five husbands; and he whom you now have is not your husband: in that said you truly.* It was necessary to awaken this woman to a sense of her sinfulness. It was no use putting on plasters where there was no knowledge of a sore, and no use attempting to fill the void where there was no feeling of emptiness. So first she must be brought low. She must be made to see herself in the glass of the Truth of God. And then she would begin to understand her need of salvation. Oftentimes, in seeking to bless people, the kindest way is not to build them up, but to pull them down—not to begin to encourage their hopes—but to let them see how hopeless their case is apart from Sovereign Grace.

19. *The woman said unto Him, Sir, I perceive that You are a Prophet.* She did not deny Christ's charges. She could not, for they were so accurately descriptive of her whole life.

20-23. *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship you know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the*

hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. It is not the *place* which makes the true worship—it is the heart. It is not even the *day*—it is the state of a man's mind. It is not that the place is said to be holy and, therefore, prayer is accepted—every place is equally holy where holy men worship God. All distinctions of buildings are heathenish or, at the best, Jewish—they are done away with by Christ.

23-26. *For the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. The woman said unto Him, I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things. Jesus said unto her, I that speak unto you am He.* And she believed it, for what she had heard had prepared her mind for this declaration! Christ's reading of her heart had convinced her that He was the Messiah. How many have been brought to Christ's feet by having their characters laid bare in the preaching of the Word! The very thing they did in secret, yes, the very *thought* of their heart which they never communicated even to their best friend, has been told them. Their dream has been revealed to them and the interpretation of it, too—and, by God's Grace, they have been convinced that He who can thus read their hearts must be the Son of God!

27, 28. *And upon this came His disciples and marveled that He talked with the woman, yet no man said, What do You seek? Or, Why do You talk with her? The woman then left her water pot, and went her way into the city.* So that blessed interview was broken up by Christ's own disciples! What a set of blunderers we are! We sometimes come in between Christ and poor sinners whom He is going to bless. There is many a lover of stern doctrine, with an unsympathetic heart and a harsh tone of speech, who has intruded just when he was not needed! If we cannot help poor souls, Brothers and Sisters, let us never hinder them! What Christian would not wish to help a poor sinner to her Savior? Yet these disciples, unconscious of what they were doing, had by their very looks driven this poor woman from their Master. She "went her way into the city."

28, 29. *And said to the men, Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?* May we be made useful, even as this woman was, in bringing others to Christ' feet, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—430, 431, 473.

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

THE CLIMAX OF GOD'S LOVE
NO. 2571

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 22, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 1, 1883.

"And it shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi; and shall call Me no more, Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name."
Hosea 2:16, 17.

You who have been here, on recent Thursday nights, will remember how Israel was described at the time to which our text refers. [See Sermon #s 2564 and 2569—*Strange Ways of Love,* and *The Backsliders Door of Hope*—read/download the entire sermons free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] She was represented as a woman who had been false to her marriage vows, had left her husband and defiled herself in the most abominable way. Being greatly inflamed with evil passions, she had gone astray times out of number—and then the Lord Jehovah, who was Israel's true spiritual Husband—in the abundance of His love, sought to bring her back to Himself. He exercised her with severe discipline, taking away from her many things in which she delighted, till she became poor, sick and wretched. He hedged up her way with thorns and put obstacles in her way so that she could not find her paths. And when she went after her lovers, she could not overtake them. But, notwithstanding all that, she still continued to go further and further away from Him to whom her love was due—the God to whom she owed everything—the only living and true God who had been so gracious and true to her.

At last the Lord tried other means of bringing her back to Himself. Instead of driving her from Him, or threatening her with destruction, He allured her into the wilderness and there He manifested Himself to her in all the charms of His Divine Purity and Beauty. He drew her away from all her old companions, brought her into a place of solitude and then spoke to her very heart with a voice of Infinite Love so that He won her, again, and brought her back to Himself. And then it was that He once more gave her the joys which she had lost—and a great many others—and made her rich with everything that could cause her to be, indeed, blessed!

Now comes in this passage, which I have just read in your hearing, that which appears to me to describe the climax of God's love. His Infi-

nite Mercy at last taught Israel to know Him in deed and in truth and, by the mighty power of His Grace, she was clean delivered from all her former idolatrous lovers and made to cleave in holy constancy to Jehovah, her God! I want to speak to you about that work of love in the heart of these wanderers which, at last, brought them to be right with their God. And my hope is that our meditation upon the text will be blessed in the same fashion to many others. When a man is truly right with God, he is right everywhere. As long as he is wrong with God, he may be right everywhere else, yet he is not right in the most important matter of all! But as long as he is right with God, everything is put in due order and everything will go on well with him in all respects.

Coming closely to our text, I want you to notice, first, *the conquest of love*—"It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi." That is, "my Husband." Secondly, I shall say a little upon *the jealousy of love*. "At that day . . .you shall call Me no more, Baali." Because that name had been defiled and God would not have His servants use toward Himself a title which had been stained with sin. Then, thirdly, I shall speak of *the nearness of love,* which is a point that lies concealed within the text, but which I will try to bring out. And, fourthly, I shall speak upon *the vengeance of love,* for true love will lead us to take vengeance upon that evil which has brought so much sorrow to our heart—"I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name."

I. First, then, let us think for a little while upon THE CONQUEST OF LOVE—"It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi." That is, "my Husband."

They had never called God by that name. They had stood in awe and dread of the Most High, but as to calling God, their Husband, that they had never done, though He was truly a Husband to them, for He lavished on them all the kindness and tenderness which a husband renders toward his beloved wife. Yet God's people had never given Him that love which was due in return—and they had never dared to call Him by so sweet and endearing a name as that of Ishi, "my Husband." But the Lord said, "At that day, you shall call Me, Ishi." Grace has really won us when it has won our hearts! When we yield to God not a mere external obedience, but the affection of our hearts, then all is won and all is well.

Note, first, dear Friends, that these people were so truly won back to God that *they had a new name for Him,* a name which had never occurred to them before. They had called Him, God. They had spoken to Him as Jehovah, or as El, or as Elohim, but they had never thought to call Him, "Ishi." But now they understand Him better and here is a new name for Him who is, to them, practically a new Being, a new Person. Alas, that still many men do not "know the Lord." There is a depth of meaning in that expression and to multitudes God is quite unknown. It was said, long ago, that it is the highest wisdom for a man to know himself—but I deny that. The first, the highest, the best of all wisdom is for a

man to know his God. As for himself, he is but a speck, an atom, a nothing. If he truly attains a knowledge of God, he will afterwards know himself in the best possible way. Pope said that "the proper study of mankind is man," but it is not so. His proper study is mankind's Maker, the God who made us all! But man, until he is Divinely taught, knows not God—he has not, by nature, a name for God. He borrows a name out of the Bible and calls Him, "God." That is, "*good.*" but he does not mean what he says, for if he thought that God was good, he would love Him. But inasmuch as he does not love God, he does not, in the highest sense, know God.

But when a man comes to know the Lord. When God, in all His wondrous majesty, draws near the heart and opens the eyes of the understanding till the man sees his Maker and cries, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the House of God and this is the gate of Heaven"—when he feels that the Lord is there and he knows it, then, straightway, he uses a right name for God! That is a very precious name which Christ puts into our mouths when He bids us say to God, "Our Father, which are in Heaven." And there is a wonderful sweetness when we come to know that we may call Him our Husband. I do not like to compare the two, or say which title is to be preferred—whether Husband or Father—they are both unutterably sweet when they are enjoyed to the fullest.

You see, then, dear Friends, that Grace had taught these people a new name for God. David said to the Lord, "They that know Your name will put their trust in You." In another Psalm, the Lord's response is given—"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high because he has known My name." So was it in the day of which our text speaks.

Further, that name, Ishi, "my Husband," is *a name of love.* There is a mutual engagement between the true husband and wife, they complement of each other. So is it with Christ and His Church. Yet, as I read of it in the Bible, it often astonishes me. Paul wrote to the Colossians, "It pleased the Father that in Him," (that is, in the Divine Husband, Christ Jesus), "should all fullness dwell." Then to the Ephesians he wrote, "And has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all." It is marvelous that the saints should be *to* Christ a fullness, but so it is! He is to be to us as the Husband and we are to be to Him as the dearly-beloved object of that love, desiring to return it as best we can, loving Him and Him, alone, with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. What a sweet name that is for our Divine Lord—our Husband! What but the Grace of God could ever have given backsliding Israel courage to utter it? What but the Grace of God could ever have taught us to know that we, also, might truthfully *say* it? Yet I trust that many of us do say of God in Christ Jesus, "He is our Ishi, our Husband." This name, then, is a

name of love, suggesting the mutual engagement between Christ and His people.

It is also *a name of honor, involving obedience,* "for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church. . .Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." In the relationship between Christ and His people, everything is written in capital letters, for truly He is the Head of His body, the Church. Therefore, dear Friends, it is for us who belong to Him to be obedient to Christ in everything. It was a wise word that the mother of Jesus spoke to the servants at the marriage at Cana, "Whatever He says to you, do it." That is *exactly* what we ought to do under all circumstances. Christ's will is our law. His teaching is our doctrine. He, Himself, we call Lord and we do well, for so He is. He has become everything to us, now, as the true husband is to the true wife. It is a joy to us to obey Him. If a command comes to us from Christ, our feet have wings, like the fabled Mercury! If a word comes from Christ, our mind is wax to be stamped with it, as with a seal! And we desire never to lose the impression. If we know that Christ does but *wish* a thing, it shall be as the bonds of law to us. We wish to do—no, we *long* to do His will and to have every thought brought into captivity to the Law of Christ. I am sure, dear Friends, it is a wonder of Grace when we can say this, for there was a time when we never cared for Christ. A little while ago some of us did not mind what His Laws were, or what His teaching was—He was nothing at all to us. "He was despised and we esteemed Him not." But now, how different it is! The faintest accent that falls from His lips has in it a power and a majesty which we do not wish to question! He is our Husband and we are His obedient spouse.

Husband, again, is *a name of trust and expectation.* A wife expects her maintenance and all that she needs from her husband and she ought to have it, too. It is the part of the husband to render to his wife all that he can for her necessity and her happiness. All our expectations are from Christ. Some wives bring their husbands a dowry, but we brought Christ nothing but our poor selves. Sometimes a wife has nothing but what she stands upright in, but we had not even that, for we could not stand upright at all. We were like that infant whom the Lord described by the pen of Ezekiel—cast out into the open field, neglected, unwashed, unclothed—left there to die—but when our Lord passed by, it was the time of love and He said to us, "Live." We had to be indebted to Him for life and we have had to be indebted to Him for everything since then! I have no doubt that some wives think it is a fine thing to have their husband's purse to draw from, but I know that it is *glorious* to have Christ's purse to draw from! "Of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace." And we expect to receive a great deal more and sometimes we sing about what we are to have, by-and-by—

"And a 'new song' is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set!

Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not tasted yet."

Yes, this name of husband is a name of trust and expectation and, in God's case, as the Husband of His people, the trust and the expectation are never disappointed!

But, best of all, it is a *name of indissoluble union.* I could not trust myself to speak on this wondrous theme, for even Paul, when he wrote upon it said, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and the two shall be one flesh." "This is a great mystery," added the Apostle, "but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." It is, indeed, a great mystery that Christ should have left His Father to become one flesh with His people! Think of Him here on earth, hungry, weary, toiling and, at last, scourged, crucified, faint and dying because He took upon Himself our flesh and became one with us. And now there is such a union between every Believer and Christ as can never be destroyed! Paul triumphantly asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" There is no possibility of divorce between Christ and the soul that trusts Him, for it is written, "The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away" and, therefore, He will never practice it, nor will He ever banish from His heart one whom He has taken to be His own. "Your Maker is your Husband," is a sentence full of comfort to everyone who can claim that blessed relationship! This union stands fast forever and ever. The Lord did not approve of giving a bill of divorcement in the olden days, although Moses permitted it because of the hardness of men's hearts, and He will never do what He did not approve of, but He will cling to us forever. Once joined to Christ, we shall never be divided from Him, but shall always be able to call Him, "Ishi, my Husband."

Is not this, indeed, a conquest of love? That those who were utter strangers to Christ—that those who were downright enemies to Him—that those who lived year after year, and even when they thought a little, did not give Him a thought? Or if they thought of Him, refused to yield to Him—is it not wonderful that even *these* should come to be as much in love with Christ as the newly-married wife is with her husband—and that these people should be linked with Christ so as never to be separated from Him, world without end? O Beloved, I think I said nothing but the truth when I called it the conquest of love!

II. Now we come to the second part of the text, which speaks of the JEALOUSY OF LOVE—"It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi; and shall call Me no more, Baali."

What does, "Baali," mean? It means, husband. It means the same thing as Ishi. I will show you the point of difference, presently, but speaking broadly, it is the same thing. Then, why not call Him, Baali, if it means the same thing? Was there anything wrong in the word, Baali? No, nothing, for the Lord Himself uses it on other occasions. Why, then, does He say, "You shall call Me no more, Baali," when He calls Himself

so? Well, it was for this reason—they had used the name for false gods, they had called them, Baal—therefore they were not to use that title any more for Jehovah. He said to them, "You have been accustomed to speak of Me as, Baal, and to speak of this god, and that god, and all the gods as so many Baals, or Baalim. Now, from this time forth, I will have a name to Myself, and it shall be, Ishi, and you shall never again call Me, Baali." This was the command of God and, moreover, it met with His people's full consent. You may depend upon it that what God here orders, His people were willing to carry out. They would no more call Him by a name which had been dishonored by association with Israel's idols and which, therefore, could not properly be applied to Jehovah.

I want you to listen very intently to what I am about to say. Some of you have lately united with the Lord's people—may God give you great love to Himself and may that love have a holy jealousy associated with it! There are some things which, in themselves, may be right enough, but having become connected with wrong things, you must not meddle with them any more. If the word, Ishi, means, husband, and the word, Baal, also means, husband, yet, inasmuch as that word, Baal, has been used concerning idols and so has become defiled and despoiled of its beauty and purity, you must not use it in reference to God. There is nothing wrong in the word, itself, but there is evil in its associations. Therefore, drop it. There have been other words that have fallen in a similar fashion. The word, "tyrant," used to mean a lord or king—there were so many little kings of Greece who were called tyrants and who so misbehaved themselves, that at last nobody wished to wear such a name as that of tyrant! It is no longer applied to a king simply because he holds that office, but only to an oppressive tyrannical despot. So, in the Latin, there is a word which used to mean, servant, but now, if you turn to the dictionary, you will find that it means a thief—and a servant is not called by that name, but it came to mean a thief because, I suppose, in those days many servants were thieves. In this way words get pulled down from their original meaning—and this word, Baal, was just one of them. It is no use saying, "Oh, but there was a time when it was a very proper word to use!" You have nothing to do with that matter—is it a proper word to use *now*? For, if it is not, do not touch it!

There are many things in the world of that sort. I am not going to mention them, one by one, because you have your own senses and you can apply a general rule to particular instances. There are a thousand things which, today, in your minds and in the minds of all thinking persons, are connected with evil. And if you have a truly jealous love to Christ, you will say, concerning any of them, "I must not do this." Avoid the very *appearance* of evil, keep clear of it altogether! Just picture to yourself a true Ishmaelite kneeling down to worship Jehovah. I will suppose that he has been accustomed to speak of God under that word, Baal, as his Husband and, as he worships,, with others, he cries, "O Baal, hear us!" I can imagine that as God heard that prayer, He accepted

it—the man meant it rightly enough—He worshipped God under a right name, one which the Lord had given to Himself. But supposing that a heathen happened to stand where he heard the Israelite pray? He would say to himself, "That man worships Baal the same as I do!" Well, if it had been my case and I had risen from my knees, and heard such a remark as that, I would have said, "I see that the title I have used is calculated to mislead—I will never use it again—but what word shall I put in its place?" The Lord, here, answers the question! "It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi; and shall call Me no more, Baali," because the name, Baali, was likely to be misunderstood.

For God's sake be pure, for nothing but purity ought to appear in His Presence! For your own sake, be very careful—you cannot be too precise and particular. Your tendencies are toward evil, keep them in check and, for the sake of others, who, if they see you take an inch, will take a yard, be you doubly careful and let not even a name which, to you, may have been sacred and holy, come upon your lips if it has been used in an unholy manner and would suggest a sinful idea to the minds of others! That is the drift of the subject—that a man who loves Christ should be jealous of himself to the last degree.

I never knew anyone who was too precise or too Puritan—I have heard some people say that of certain men and whenever I have come to know those who have been so described, I have found them such godly people that I have wished to be like they! It is always better to be too precise than to be too lax. Our chastity of love to Christ is a thing that must not be questioned. Caesar's wife must not only be beyond blame, but she must be above suspicion—and so must Christians try to be. Oh, that we did always guard ourselves most jealously lest in anything we should grieve our Lord! Better that I deny myself a thousand things which I might take than that I should mislead one person and lead him into sin! "If meat offends my brother, I will eat no flesh while the world stands," said the Apostle Paul. He might lawfully have eaten meat and he said that he felt free in his own conscience to do as he pleased in that matter, but he had regard to the conscience of others who might be caused to stumble through him. Therefore he made himself weak that he might gain the weak and, lest haply another man, doing what he might safely do, might be lost through doing it. Take care, then, dear Friends, as to your influence upon other people. Do not be among those who say, "We shall still use the title, Baali. We always did before and it is a very proper title. God has applied it to Himself and we are not going to use anything else. What if other people do misuse it? We cannot help that—we are not our brother's keepers." That is the way Cain talked! "Am I my brother's keeper?" If there is such a man among us, I hope he will be very uncomfortable until he has come to a better state of mind! Our feeling is that we *are* our brothers' keepers and we desire, as much as lies in us, only to do that which will be safe for others to imitate. God help us to put the spirit and teaching of this passage into constant practice in our daily life!

III. Now, thirdly, I want to prove to you that in our text there is a reference to THE NEARNESS OF LOVE. It lies hidden there, as honey is concealed within a flower, and the bee must dive right into the flower to find it!

It appears, dear Friends, according to a great number of commentators, that those two words, Ishi and Baali, though they both mean, husband, yet mean, husband in a very different way. If a husband were to command his wife in an imperious fashion, as I suppose the Oriental husbands usually did, then the spouse might say, "My lord," or, "Baali." But when the husband was kind, tender and loving, his wife might say, "Ishi." Baali means, "my husband," "my lord," as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him, "My lord," or, "Baali." Yes, but, Ishi, means, "My husband," "My well-beloved," "My man," in that genial, loving, tender sense in which that expression is used by a loving wife. Let us be astonished as we learn that God would have His people call Him no more, "Baali," or, "Lord," but, "Ishi," "My Man," "My Husband."

God is thus revealed to His people as *ruling them not so much by law, as by love.* It is no longer "You shall," and, "You shall not," but a sweet constraint is upon them by which they delight to do His will! When the worldling dreads sin, it is because he is afraid of Hell. But the Christian is delivered from all fear of Hell and he hates sin, itself, because he fears to grieve the God he loves. In the Church of God, the great rule is not, "Do this and you shall be rewarded; do the opposite and you shall be punished." That is the way Hagar ruled Ishmael, but that is not the way in which Sarah governed Isaac! The Lord does not put us upon legal terms with Him. He does not say, "You must do this and that, or else you shall have no Grace from Me, and I will cast you off and destroy you." Nothing of the sort! You who believe in Jesus are not under the Law, but under Grace! You are under the sweet and blessed rule of gracious and generous love—

"'Tis love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move."

The Law of God drives and scourges, but it gets nothing out of us. But Love comes with its abundant gifts of all-sufficient Grace and straightway we say, "Lord, enable us to serve You. Help us to be obedient to You." Love accomplishes what Law never can—and when we view God as Love, then He is Ishi—and no longer do we look upon Him as ruling us by Law, for then His name would be Baali.

Further, this nearness of love *changes servitude into honor.* When we are under the Law and call God, Baali, life is servitude. Look at some who are trying to serve God without really knowing Him—they must *do* so much, they must *feel* so much, they must *pray* so much, they must *work* so much, they must go through such-and-such ceremonies—and all they do is looked upon as being something required at their hands by a stern taskmaster! Rowland Hill tells the story of one who said that she had been preparing herself for the "sacrament"—she took a week to do it

and then she found out that she had mistaken the day—and she said that through her mistake she had lost the whole week! That is the way they act and speak to whom God is Baali! But the child of God, when he comes to the Communion Table, if he thinks it right to spend the whole week in getting himself in a right condition of heart for so doing, would say, if the Table were not spread, "Well, I have had a blessing even in preparing for it. Even if I cannot, just now, observe the outward ordinance, I have been waiting upon God and so I have drawn near to Him in spirit and in truth."

It is one of our highest pleasures to attend a place of worship, yet to some people it is a self-denial. Well, I do not say to them, "Do not go to the House of Prayer." But I do say, "You are not going in the right spirit." I like to see the people coming here on the Lord's-Day, or on a week-night. I can almost tell them by the way they walk. They trip along joyously as if they were pleased to come and as if they came to enjoy themselves, as I believe they do. That is how God would have you worship Him—in the spirit of freedom—not in the spirit of slavery! Does He want slaves to grace His Throne? In the old days of Legree and the slave-drivers, a man might be thought great who had all his slaves bowing down before him as he walked along, but what true man wishes for that sort of servitude? To rule over free men should be the ambition of a monarch—God will rule over spirits that love Him, that delight in Him, that are perfectly free and that find their freedom in doing His will. You shall call Him no more, Baali, counting it as servitude to wait upon Him, but you shall call Him, Ishi. It shall be a joy and an honor to serve your beloved Lord!

You know how a loving wife waits upon her husband—it is never a slavery to her, but always a delight. She thinks of a hundred things that she can do for his comfort—some of them things that are perfectly unnecessary, they would never be commanded by any kind of law—but her loving heart suggests to her that she should do them so as to give him pleasure. So is it with the child of God. He tries to think of what he can do for Jesus and he never imagines that he can do enough for the Savior who has loved him and died to save him! Had he ten thousand hearts and lives, he would like to spend them all—and the help they bring with them—and the force they have in them for His dear Lord and Master!

The name, Ishi, instead of, Baali, further means that, henceforth, the *Believer's life is not one of fear, but one of confidence.* The slave is afraid of the crack of the whip—look how the blood flies from his poor cheeks, lest he should feel the cruel lash! That is the condition of the man who thinks that his eternal safety depends upon his own watchfulness, his own prayerfulness, his own doings and his own will! But the child of God says, "I am trusting in Christ, I am everlastingly saved and have no need to fear." And he adds—

"Now for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count but loss,

My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to His Cross."

He is now not at all afraid. What? Not afraid of sinning? Yes, he is, but not on *legal* ground. The true Christian reminds me of a little boy who had a very kind and loving father and he was very fond of his father, too. One day some boys agreed to go and rob an orchard and they said to him, "Jack, you come with us." "No," he answered, "I cannot go with you, for it would grieve my father." "Oh, but," they said, "your father loves you and he won't beat you as our fathers will if they find out." "Ah," he replied, "that is the very reason why I could not go—because he never beats me—he is so kind and loving that I will not do anything to grieve him."

That is just the spirit that animates true Christians! If we live unto God, we cannot bear to do what is wrong. Immortal principles forbid the child of God to sin—he must be holy! Love binds him fast, crucifies him, makes him dead to what he once loved and makes him live in newness of life. You who prefer the bondage of the Law, may have it if you please. You who like the crack of that whip, may live under it if you will. But oh, if you once really knew the Love of God, you would never want to go back to that servitude! You would never say, "Baali," and crouch down, like a poor woman before a husband who was about to strike her. But you would come to your Lord in loving confidence and say to Him, "Offend *You*, my Lord? I cannot do it! I love You too well for that. I would give all I am and all I have, that I might give You pleasure, for You are my Ishi!"

O Christ, by your bleeding wounds and bloody sweat, by Your death and resurrection, You are my Man, my Husband! You are Man and You have become Man for me. My Man, to whom my soul is married, once and for all, and I must love You and serve You till my life's last breath."—

"I will love You in life, I will love You in death,
And praise You as long as You lend me breath!
And say, when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
'If ever I loved You, my Ishi, 'tis now.'"

IV. So to close, I want you, for a minute or two, to notice, in the fourth place, THE VENGEANCE OF LOVE, for, when jealousy is stirred up, love makes a clean sweep of everything that comes in its way—"I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name."

What *a sweeping vengeance* it is! "I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth." The very name of the one we once loved shall be taken away from us! One good effect of the long captivity of the Jews was that after they returned to their own land, they never fell into idolatry again—and I do not believe they ever will. They are clean cured of that evil! I should think it is the rarest thing in the world to find a Jew become a Romanist because it seems contrary, now, to the very nature of Israel to bow down before a visible emblem. But what did the Jews do? They took the name that they used to give to their false god, Baal, and they applied it to the devil—hence you get the term Beelzebub, or Baal-

zebub, the god of flies, the god of dung—a caricature name which they applied to the devil himself. So, the things you loved when you were in the world and made your god, are now to you like the devil! What a change the Grace of God makes when it enters the heart! Has your false god become your devil and what you despised become your God? That is the meaning of the promise of the text—"I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth." When we pronounce the word that once was sweet to us, it shall positively mean something else. It shall be bitter to us even to think of it. There are some words which were in our vocabulary when we were ungodly, but we never use them now, or, if we do use them, they mean the very opposite to what they meant before we came to love the Lord!

There are professors who talk a great deal about some things that are better not mentioned. Paul says, "It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." I always regret, when a person tells the story of his past life, when he seems to think it necessary to drag in some of the black bits. If you do so, my Brother, mind that you rub in plenty of salt before you put any of the unsavory meat, otherwise it may leave a bad smell behind. There may be mischief done even by those who fancy that they are magnifying the Grace of God. It is sometimes necessary to tell what we were, in our unconverted state, but if we do so, we must be very careful not to take the name of Baalim on our lips while we are trying to glorify our God!

The fact is, dear Friends, the Lord makes *such a thorough change, such a spiritual change,* that it is true of past things, "they shall no more be remembered by their name." That is the last clause of the text. You cannot help remembering the things in which you delighted in the days of your ignorance. You cannot quite blot them out of your memory, even though you have forsaken them long ago. But you do not remember them by their old name and you do not call them by that name now. You have learned to call a spade a spade, and you do not know it, now, except by that name. People talk about "seeing life," but if they were to say to a Christian that he had been seeing life, he would not understand them. He would say, "You do not see life in the places where you go—you see corruption. To see life is to live unto God." "Oh, but," says one, "I have been enjoying myself, I have been having pleasure." But, to the Christian, those words do not mean what they mean to the ungodly man, for sin would be no pleasure to him—it would be utter misery. The swine find great pleasure in a few inches of filthy mud but if you could change them into men and put them to sleep in nice soft beds, I guarantee you that then they would have a good night's rest!

I daresay the devil finds himself at home in Hell, or wherever his dwelling place may be, but if he could be converted into a seraph, he would not stay in Hell for an hour! He would never want to go there again for pleasure, of that I am certain. And when a man who professes to be converted says that he goes into the world, and into sin, for pleasure, it

is as if an angel went to Hell for enjoyment! The Lord give you Grace, Dearly-Beloved, so to love Him and to find such perfect liberty in His service, that though you may be tempted to sin, you will not yield, for invincible love binds you to His heart and holds you fast forever!

Paul said, and it was a grand utterance, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." When a Roman had a slave whom he did not mean to ever sell, or to part with—in his cruelty he branded him with his own name. Suppose that it was Caesar? He took his slave and burned the name of Caesar right into his flesh! So the Apostle says, "I bear in my body the marks"—the brand—"of the Lord Jesus. I am His forever! I never wish to run away from Him, nor can I." There are some friends about to be baptized. I only trust that they will receive the spiritual brand right into their soul. What a brand this Baptism is to a man! You see, it is not on his arm—so he cannot cut it off—it is all over him. It is a water-mark that cannot be removed! You may go into sin, but you have been baptized, and that fact shall rise against you in judgment! Whatever you do, you have been professedly buried with Christ and if you are not dead, you have no business to be buried! But if you have lied to God and, during the rest of your life, if you turn away from Him, yet that mark is still upon you. Woe unto you, for you have been a deceiver!

But the true and genuine Christian does not mind what mark he has, to tell to whom he belongs. "Set it on my forehead," he says, "for there I hope to wear it, by-and-by." "His servants shall serve Him and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads." God grant that we may all come to that glorious condition, for our 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.

FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST
NO. 2572

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 29, 1893.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
EARLY IN THE YEAR 1856.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"
1 Corinthians 10:16.

THERE is one great difference between Christ, as the Founder of the Christian religion, and all mere men who have attempted to fashion a system of belief. The difference is not merely that Christ's was a true religion and theirs a false one, but there is another distinction. All false prophets have sought to keep their disciples at a distance and to impress upon them not merely a high estimation of their importance, but also a superstitious reverence for their person. Yes, and sometimes altogether putting aside the thought of allowing any of their disciples to hold communion with them. Look at the false prophet, Mohamed, and you will see how he kept himself aloof from his disciples. He taught them to regard him as something superior to themselves. And the caliphs, to this day, and all those who take to themselves the titles of his successors, endeavor to invest themselves with solemn pomp and state. They forbid all to approach them without certain salaams and salutations—they never allow their followers to hold fellowship with them.

It was also so with the old Pagan priests. They bade the worshippers fall down before them, but they never permitted them to come near to them and hold fellowship with them. They were for driving the people away and, in fact, the whole system of their religion depended upon the eminence of one who kept himself distinct from every other man. They were to be looked up to as a god, being regarded as a personage above all the rest, with whom they might, on no pretense whatever, hold any communion at all! Look at the "Pope," that great antichrist and false prophet! Does he encourage any to stand on friendly terms with him? Is he at all times accessible? Ah, no! He surrounds himself with cardinals and bishops and keeps himself distinct from others. It must not be expected that a "Pope" is to be seen by everybody, nor can it be supposed that he should herd with common men. It is very much the same with the bishops of another church that we know. How they labor to put men away from them with their pomp, their tinsel, their gewgaws, and their parade!

Christ, as the great Founder of a new dispensation, revealed the idea of communion with Himself on the part of everyone of His disciples and, today, instead of endeavoring to keep His followers at a distance, He is always striving to bring them near to Him. He blames them not for familiarity, but because they are not familiar enough! He does not praise them because they stand at a respectful distance, but He praises Enoch because he walks with God. And He loves John because he lays his head on the bosom of his Savior. Christ, our Master, loves to have all His followers live near Him! He loves to have them in sympathy with Him. He loves to make them feel that while He is their superior and their King, He is also as their fellow, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh, in ties of blood, one with them! One objective of Christ's religion is to bring all His disciples into union and communion with its great Founder that they may have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

Our present subject is the Doctrine of Fellowship with Christ. We think there are four degrees of fellowship with Christ. The first is *the fellowship of communion.* The second, *the fellowship of sympathy.* The third, *the fellowship of unity.* And the fourth will be *the fellowship of Heaven.*

I. The first grade of communion with Christ is that with which all Believers commence, and without which they cannot attain to any other. It is THE FELLOWSHIP OF COMMUNION.

Probably a large proportion of those here who love the Savior will not be able to go much farther with me than with regard to the fellowship of communion. Let me explain myself. I meet with one or two of you, I talk with you, we discourse with one another. In Scripture phraseology it might be said, we "commune with each other," "we hold communion with one another." So, Beloved, there are times when Christ and His people meet—when He talks to them and they talk to Him and so, "commune with Him." That is the fellowship of communion. Let me show you how we enter into it.

We enjoy this kind of communion when, by *faith,* we lay hold of Christ and when Christ, in honoring faith, lays hold of us. And when, under sorrows and troubles, we go and tell our Master what our sorrows and troubles are. We are talking with Him while He cheers us, reminds us of His promises, speaks to our heart with that sweet voice which lays our fears in their graves and makes our tears to dry. It is then that we hold with Him a fellowship of communion—the communion of faith. Mark you, this is no mean attainment, to be able to take Christ's arm, to command His ear, to possess His heart and to feel that when our lips speak to Him, His lips reply to us. It is only by His Grace that when we look at Him and are lightened, that lightening comes from the fact that He looks at us—and that we are cheered by knowing that the reason of our cheerfulness is because His right hand is under our head and His left hand embraces us.

It is a privilege for which angels might barter their crowns, to be allowed to talk with Christ as Faith does, for Faith asks of Christ and Christ gives to Faith! Faith pleads promises and Christ fulfills promises!

Faith rests wholly upon Christ and Christ lays all His honor upon the head of Faith and is content to let Faith wear His own diadem. Yes, He uncrowns Himself to put His crown upon the head of Faith! You young Believers know how sweet it is, by holy assurance, to come near your Master. You put your hand into His side and you say, "My Lord, and my God." You know what it is to throw your arms around Him and to receive that gracious smile from Him, without which your spirits could not rest. That is the communion of faith, the communion which we have by faith in Jesus Christ.

There is, too, a communion in *prayer* which is called the communion of conversation, for, in prayer, what do I do? If I pray aright, I talk to God! And if I pray with faith, what does Christ do, but talk with me? In prayer, the heart of man empties itself before God and then Christ empties His heart out to supply the needs of His poor believing child. In prayer, we confess to Christ our needs and He reveals to us His fullness. We tell Him our sorrows, He tells us His joys. We tell Him our sins, He shows to us His righteousness. We tell Him the dangers that lie before us, He tells us of the shield of Omnipotence with which He can and will guard us. Prayer *talks with God*, yes, it walks with Him and he who is much in prayer will hold very much fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Then, again, there is a fellowship of communion which we derive from *meditation.* When we sit down and in thought see Christ in Gethsemane, and witness the blood-red drops wetting the soil. When we look upon Him shamed, spit upon, mocked and buffeted. When we view Him on Golgotha and hear His death-shriek startling the darkness—then our heart goes out after Him and we love Him. While He holds up His hands and says, "These were pierced for you," we hold up our hearts and say, "Here are our hearts, Lord, take and seal them; they are Yours because bought with Your precious blood."

Have you never felt the sweet communion of meditation? Many Christians know little about it. They have so much occupation, such a perpetual whirl of business, that they have not half-an-hour to spend in meditation upon God. Beloved, you will never hold much personal communion with the Savior unless you have a place where you can sit down and—

"View the flowing
Of His soul-redeeming blood,
With Divine assurance knowing
That He made your peace with God."

You cannot expect to talk much to Christ unless your mind is freed from the cares of earth. Oh, 'tis then that Christ descends and talks with His children—and gives us sweet communion with Him—and fellowship in meditation on His sufferings! Children of God, you know this! All of you who are His people have had some taste of this communion of conversation with God. You know much more of it than I can tell. Alas! Alas, that the great majority of the people of God are far enough from understanding even this first and faintest form of communion with Jesus Christ!

Let me make one or two remarks here, before we pass away from this communion of conservation. I would not have you despise this fellowship because you have not attained to the rest I am about to mention, but, dear Friends, take care that you hold communion with Christ. There is a ladder between the Believer's soul and Heaven—mind that you tread its rungs very often. There is a road between Mansoul and the Celestial City—let the track be hard-beaten with the hoofs of the steeds of prayer! Let the chariots of praise whirl along the highway to Glory! Do not let your Jesus live a day without a line from you—and do not be happy if you live a day without a word from Him! I marvel at some professors who can live weeks and months quite satisfied without holding this fellowship with Christ. What? A wife happy if her husband smiles not on her? And is not Christ my Husband and shall I be blessed, shall I be easy, if He shuts His mouth and speaks not a word to me? Can I be content if I have not one smile all day long? Is Christ my Brother and shall I be willing to live without the assurance of my Brother's love to me? Can I be content to pass a week without knowing that my Brother's heart is still beating with affection towards me? Verily, Christians, I marvel at you! And angels marvel, too, that you can be so foolish, so stolid, so stone-like, as to live days beyond number without holding even this most common of all communions with our Lord Jesus Christ!

Stir yourselves up, Beloved! You have a ticket to admit you to the King's Palace—why do you not enter? You have an invitation to the wedding feast—why do you not go? You have constant access to the banqueting house—why do you not go and feast on Divine Love? There are the "apples of gold in baskets of silver"—why do you not go and take them? There is Christ's open heart! There are His open hands! His open eyes! His open ears! Will you not go to Him who stands ready and waiting to bless you? And you, too, poor Sinner—I have often thought that a true description of Christ on the Cross would be a fine sermon to illustrate that hymn—

"Come and welcome, Sinner come!"

Do you not see the Savior there? He has His arms stretched out, as though He had them wide open to take a big sinner in. There are His hands nailed fast, as if they intended to wait there till you were brought to Him! His head is hanging down, as if He had stooped to kiss you. And there are His feet pouring out streams of blood, as if His very blood would run after you, if you would not come after Him! Verily, if you saw Christ by faith, each bleeding wound and quivering atom of His body would say to you—

"Come and welcome, Sinner, come!"

Much more do they say to *you,* beloved children of God, "Come to your Savior and hold this fellowship of conversation with Jesus Christ your Lord."

II. Now we have done with the lowest grade of fellowship and we pass on to another—THE FELLOWSHIP OF SYMPATHY.

Let me tell you what I mean by this expression. I said before that if we meet two or three friends and converse together, that is communion. But

there was one friend there who had a lofty project in hand and, though I talked to him, I did not share his views and I did not wish to see his project accomplished. Therefore I did not enjoy such deep communion with him as I might otherwise have done. Another of my friends was exceedingly sick, but I was not suffering, just then, so that when he spoke of his illness, I could not commune with him as fully as I could have wished to do. There was Another who was upbraided, scorned and spit upon—but I was not assailed in the same way and, therefore, I had only partial communion with Him and that not of the deepest kind. I could not say that I had complete fellowship with Him in His sufferings. But, Christians, some of you have climbed another step on the heavenly ladder of communion—you have come to hold communion with Christ in sympathy!

Here I must divide this head of my discourse into two or three points. Some of us have known what it is to hold communion with Christ in sympathy when we have *suffered just like Christ.* Did you ever find a friend fail you—a friend of whom you expected far better things, at whose table you had often sat, who had walked to the House of God with you—and with whom you had held sweet converse? Did you not find him, all of a sudden, unaccountably lifting up his heel against you and doing all he could to bring despite and injury to you? Did you not press your hand to your burning brow and say, "Ah! Christ had His Judas and now I can hold communion with Christ, because my friend has deserted me, too. And I can sympathize with Christ in the desertion of men"?

Did you ever have a false report spread about you? Possibly, somebody said you were "a drunk and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Or, perhaps, someone said that on such-and-such a night you committed such-and-such an act. Or, if they could not stain your character by charging you with immorality, they said that you were insane! And did not your spirit, at first, beat high with passion as you thought that you would answer the calumny? But, in a moment, you put your hand to your heart, as you said, "Ah! 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." And did you not sit down and say, "Now I can hold fellowship with Christ in my reproaches. Now I can bear a part in the brunt of the battle. Now I can feel as He did, when He, too, was oppressed by wicked men"?

Some of you, also, have been exceedingly poor. Here and there, one could say, "I have not a place where to lay my head," and looking down on your ragged garments, you may have thought, "Ah, now I know how Jesus felt when He said, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.' And so," you thought, "I am holding the fellowship of sympathy with Him in His poverty."

There was a time, too, *when you prayed and received no answer*—your agonized spirit went backward and forward many times while you cried

to God, but no reply came. In the intensity of your importunity, you could almost have "sweat, as it were, great drops of blood," *as* Jesus did! Yet God did not answer you. Rising from your knees, you only rose to fall down upon them, again, and, at last, you clasped your hands in agony and said, "O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me! Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will." And you started up, for you thought you heard your Lord say those words in tones of deeper woe and greater agony than you had ever dreamed of! And you said, "Ah! I, in my humble measure, have held fellowship with Him whose bloody sweat has made Him always memorable, and whose agony in Gethsemane helped to make Him my Savior."

And, perhaps, too, you have known what it is, at times, to lose the sight of the Countenance of God. You have said, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come, even, to His seat!" Your heart melted with agony because God seemed to frown on you. Your prayers were rejected. You had no light of His Countenance. You had no peace, no light, no love, no joy, no God—and you cried, "My God! My God! Why have You forsaken me?" And then you remembered that Christ said those words, too, and that you were holding communion of *sympathy* with Him, for you were feeling just as He felt—you had entered into a part of His agony, you had drunk some drops of the awful cup which He drained to its dregs, you had dived a little into the sea without a bottom, into which Christ plunged—you had the fellowship of sympathy, for you suffered with Him.

That is the most wonderful fellowship in the world, the fellowship of fellow-suffering. Those two holy martyrs who were burned at Oxford have this link forever between them because they were burned in the same fire. Oh, what sweet fellowship they had because they were to die together! Nothing makes us love Christ like feeling the same whip on our shoulder which Christ had on His, to be pierced with the same nails, to be spit upon by the same mouths and to suffer, though in a very humble degree, the same kind of sufferings which Christ Himself endured! O wondrous Grace, that we should be allowed to share in our body the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Some of us are not called to suffer so much as to serve. And we, too, have our *communion with Christ in labor.* See the Sunday school teacher who takes the little children on his knee as he teaches them. Though some laugh, he seems to say, as did his Lord, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." There is the same spirit in the servant as there was in his Master—and he is holding communion with Christ in labor! See the faithful evangelist. He is in an open field and he is preaching to the people with hands uplifted and with an earnestness that makes him eloquent. Look! He has concluded. He feels a sweet stillness in his soul. He knows not the reason of it, but it is because he has been having communion with Christ and has felt, in a measure, as Christ did, when we have wept over your poor dying souls. When, on our bended knees we have asked God for your salvation. When we have

groaned and cried to bring you near to God. When, with most impassioned supplication we have wrestled for your souls—then, Beloved, we think we have had some communion with Christ, for —

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

He, too, wept over Jerusalem and said, "If you had known, even you, at least in this, your day, the things which belong unto your peace but now they are hid from your eyes." Laboring Christians have sympathy with Christ and when they work with might and main, with good intentions, with earnest desires, with cries and tears, they can say, "O Lord, we have entered into fellowship with You!"

So too, we have fellowship with Christ, a heavenly *fellowship of desire,* when we neither suffer nor work with Him, but yet sympathize with Him. Perhaps you are not often sick, but you often feel a fellowship of compassionate pity and love. You are not persecuted—you almost wish you were. Perhaps you have very little talent and you cannot labor for Christ, but you have sometimes said, as you have trodden the way to this Chapel, "What would I not give to see sinners saved? Oh, I think I would be willing to die if I might but have my son and my daughter converted to God." Do you know that, just at that moment, you were holding communion with Christ, for you felt just as Christ did, who loved us with a love so pure and so perfect, that He gave up His body to death that He might redeem us from Hell? You have, perhaps, also said to Jesus, sometimes, "I have but little that I can give to You but—

'Had I ten thousand hearts, dear Lord,
I'd give them all to Thee!
Had I ten thousand tongues, they all
Should join the harmony.'"

Ah, you had fellowship with Christ, then, for you desired to do all that you could for the extension of His Kingdom!

I will show how we hold *fellowship with Christ in our designs.* You see two men in a court of justice. One man stands there to be tried—there is every probability that he will be condemned. There is a person in court who is about to plead—he is a barrister, but, besides that, he is a friend of the prisoner. The man is being tried for his life. Do you see the awful agony on his face? But up rises his advocate and you notice that as he pleads, he turns his eyes towards the prisoner at the bar. And when he sees the tears start from the poor man's eyes, out comes an eloquent period! There is a sigh just heaved by the culprit—look how the counselor waxes hot. The prisoner begins to weep excessively and hides his face. Do you notice how the advocate gets more fiery and more zealous as he proceeds, and how much more pathetic his speech becomes, and how earnestly he pleads as his tongue is set at liberty? Why is that? Because he is in fellowship with the poor man! He feels for him! He is not *talking to him*—that would only be the fellowship of conversation—he is *feeling* with him and their hearts are near akin. Even supposing they have not seen each other before, if they feel for one another, they are nearer akin than blood-relationship could make them!

Beloved, when you see a minister pleading with souls as if he were pleading for himself. When you hear him contending for Jesus Christ's Divinity as much as if he were contending for his own honor, that minister is holding communion with Christ! And when you see a saint speaking to a poor sinner of the Redeemer's death and pointing to his wounds, why, every drop of Calvary's blood seems to make the man speak more eloquently and every groan he thinks he hears makes him urge his plea in more desperate earnestness with men! This, Beloved, is sympathy with Christ, fellowship with Him—and that I call a higher grade of communion than the fellowship of conversation. I hope some of you have arrived at it. If you have, you will be more useful than those who only understand the fellowship of conversation. God grant to us all the fellowship of fellow-feeling, the fellowship of *sympathy with Christ*!

III. The third point is THE FELLOWSHIP OF UNITY.

Do you see this hand? Do you see this brow? This hand and this brow are more nearly allied together than my brother's heart and mine, although he loves me with all his heart and would plead for me even to the death. But this hand and this brow have not only a communion of fellow-feeling, they have the *same* feeling. The members of the body have positively the same feeling—so Christ's mystical members feel the same emotion as He does.

You ask, "Do Christians ever arrive at this stage of fellowship?" Yes, certainly they do—the Supper of the Lord was intended to set forth that highest grade of communion which Christians ever hold with their Master here below. It is not a communion with Him in His sufferings, it is not a communion with Him in His service, but it is *a communion with Himself*. You Believers are invited *spiritually* to eat the flesh of Christ, and *spiritually* to drink His blood—and that is a nearer, clearer fellowship than any of which we have spoken of before because it brings you into positive unity with Him. It makes you feel that you are not only pleading for Him as your Friend, but that you are a *part of Him*, a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. Many hearers of the Gospel do not understand this great mystery. Some even think it is profanity to talk of this oneness with Christ. It *would* be the very height of profanity for a man to say, "I am one with Christ," if the Scripture did not warrant him in saying so! To call oneself, "a friend of God," would be blasphemous presumption—but Scripture says that Believers *are* His friends and, therefore, there is no blasphemy in repeating the declaration.

Some may think it is absurd to talk of our being "one with the Savior." It is not absurd, because it is Scriptural. We *are* so and we feel, when we drink the wine, that the blood of the Savior is spiritually in our veins, as well as in His—that we are brethren in ties of blood. I hope we shall be able to say that we were one with Him when He died, one with Him when He rose, one with Him when He triumphed over the grave, one with Him when He ascended up on high, one with Him, now, and one with Him eternally! I believe that not a few of us will get so near to Christ that we shall not only lay our heads on His bosom, but shall do more than that—

we shall not put our heart *against* His heart, but right *into* His heart—and we shall feel as much one with Christ as the little drop of dew is with the stream into which it falls. I hope we shall be as much a portion of Christ, while we sit around the Communion Table, as the particle of flesh is of the body and shall feel that each pulse that beats in Him also throbs through our frame—that the blood of Christ runs through our veins! That each sigh we heave, He heaves, and that each groan we utter, He utters! I hope we shall hear Him say—

"I feel at My heart all your sighs and your groans,
For you are most near Me, My flesh and My bones.
In all your distresses your Head feels the pain,
Yet all are most needful, not one is in vain,"

Beyond this, the Christian cannot survive on earth! It is the highest style of communion, till—

"That happy hour of full discharge
Shall set his ransomed soul at large!
Unbind his soul and drop his clay,
And speed is wings far, far away"—

up where Christ dwells!

And there, Beloved, we shall know communion with Christ in a sense which only folly will labor to depict, for wisdom's self knows nothing of it! There at His feet we will sit and on His breast we will lean! There from His lips will we hear sweet music, from His mouth we will breathe perpetual balm, from His eyes we will draw Divine Light! We will press His hand inside these palms. We will kiss Him with these very lips. We will put ourselves within His arms we will abide all day close by our Beloved. We will talk with Him. We will be with Him wherever He goes. And He shall lead His sheep "unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

IV. This fellowship, of which I have been speaking, is a steppingstone to that best, that beatified fellowship which we shall have in a few more years—THE FELLOWSHIP OF HEAVEN.

O Christians do you ever imagine how sweet it will be to be with your Lord? I sometimes think to myself—Oh, how strange it will seem, to have a crown upon this head, to have sandals of gold on these feet, to have a vesture of white on this poor body, to have rings of everlasting love decorating these fingers, to have a harp, over which my delighted fingers shall run, making it emit the sweetest melody in praise of Jesus! And to have a throne on which to sit to judge the tribes of Israel. To have songs more melodious than music ever evoked, perpetually rolling from my lips! To have my heart brimful of bliss and my soul baptized in love and glory! Above, beneath, around, within, without, EVERYWHERE, it is Heaven! I breathe Heaven, I drink Heaven, I feel Heaven, I think Heaven, everything is Heaven!

Oh, "what must it be to be there?" To be there is to be with Christ! Wait but a little while, Dearly-Beloved, and you shall realize what Paul meant when He said, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with

hands, eternal in the heavens." Soon, World, I shall say farewell to you! Soon, beloved Friends, I shall, for the last time, shake hands with you! Soon, these eyes shall see their last dim mists, there last tears shall have been wiped away forever! My last sighs shall have been wafted away by the breath of God and there, ah, there! God knows how soon, there—

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

—I shall be with Him forever!

Do you believe that concerning yourselves, my dear Christian Brothers and Sisters? Then, why are you afraid to die? Why are you so often fearing? What? Men and women, Brothers and Sisters, do you believe that in a few more days you will be in Heaven—and see all you love and all you live for here below? Do you believe that in a few more months or years, you will clasp your Savior and be blessed forever? Why, Beloved, it is enough to make you leap for joy and clap your hands in ecstasy! What? You are troubled? You are desponding? No, go your way, eat your bread with joy, be happy all your life, for you know that your Redeemer lives and though after your flesh, worms shall destroy this body, yet in your flesh you shall see God!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-31.

Verses 12, 13. *For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, whether we are bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.* Oh, what a sacred oneness that is which subsists between all the Lord's people! We are not simply Brothers and Sisters, but we are one! We are not allied by affinity, but by actual identity! We are parts of the same body. We are brought into spiritual membership with each other as real and as effectual as that membership which subsists between the various parts of the body. Yet we are not all alike, although we are all of one body. Some are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are bond, some are free. And yet, in some things, we are all alike, for we have all been baptized by one Spirit. And, moreover, we have all been made to drink into one Spirit—we have had one spiritual baptism, and we have had one spiritual drinking. Would to God that we felt more one, that our hearts beat more in tune with each other, that we had a sympathy with each other in woes and sufferings, that we had a fellow feeling with all who love the Lord and could at all times weep with those that weep, as well as rejoice with those that rejoice

14, 15. *For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body—is it, therefore, not of the body?* Do not be comparing yourself with others and saying, "Ah, if I were such-and-such a person, I might then think myself to be part of Christ's body." No, you might not, even if you were just like he. As there are only certain members of a sort in a man's body, so, by a parity of reasoning,

there would not be more than a certain number of members alike in the mystical body. We do not imagine that there will be many members of this body, the Church, of one class, or of one character—so that, if you are different from others, you are fulfilling a different office in the body. You may, from that fact, draw an inference of comfort rather than one of sorrow and despondency. Even should you say, "Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body, are you therefore not of the body?" Oh, no! You are still of the body, even though you do not think that you are.

16, 17. *And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were am eye, where were the hearing?* If we were all preachers. If we could all see into God's Truth and set it forth in a public manner, where should we get our congregations?

17. *If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?* There must be different members to fill different offices. If we were all so one that there was no distinction, whatever. If we were all of one rank, all of one age, all of one standing, the body would be incomplete.

18-21. *But now has God set the members, every one of them, in the body, as it has pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of you: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.* Brothers and Sisters, you sometimes think there are some belonging to the Church whom we could well spare. But there is not one superfluous member in the whole body! If they are truly united to Christ, they have all their offices, all their places. There is not a poor old woman who has not been able to get up to the House of Prayer for several years, who is not of some use to the Church, for she lies upon her bed and there she intercedes with God! There is not a member of the Church so humble, so illiterate, so uninstructed, that he or she may not be of essential service to the whole body. There is some little part, my Brother or Sister, which you are to take in the great Church of Christ. You may not be always able to tell what it may be, but still there is a place for you to fill! There is a linchpin in a chariot—who thinks much about or thanks that pin? Indeed, it is so very small and insignificant, who would imagine it is necessary to the locomotion or speed? The wheels carry it around, but who would suppose that if it were taken away, the wheel would fly off? Perhaps you are like one of these little linchpins which keep the wheel right. You may not know what use you are, but, possibly, you prevent someone else from turning aside. Let us each keep in our station, endeavoring, God helping us, to exert the influence which He has given us.

22-24. *No, much more, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need but God both tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked.* A moment's thought will

tell you that those parts of our frame which are most tender are the most necessary parts; and those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these, by clothing them more than other parts, we bestow more abundant honor. And our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness, for our comely parts have no need of being covered and, therefore, we leave them exposed.

25. *That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care, one for another.* We have heard this text urged by some who are in the Church of England as a proof that we are wrong in departing from it. They tell us that there should be no schism in the body. We beg to tell them that there *is* no schism in the body that we know of! We do not belong to their body and, therefore, we make no schism in that body—we are quite clear of them. We have neither stick, nor stone, nor part, nor lot in their State Establishment! Therefore we do not create a schism in the body. When they divide themselves into Puseyites and Evangelicals, they make a schism in their own body, but, as long as we are all united, as long as the members of a church walk together in unity, there is no schism in the body. We are different bodies altogether! They say that a schismatic is one who departs *from* a Church, and makes a rent *from* it. By no means! A schismatic is one who makes a rent *in* it, not *from* it. We, I say, are not schismatics. Those who are in the Church of England and yet do not agree with its fundamental principles and its Articles of Faith, they are schismatics! But we are not.

26. *And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it.* Is that true of our churches? I am afraid not. The members of the one Church of Christ have not been brought to that unity of feeling and sympathy which they ought to have.

26-30. *Or one member is honored, al1 the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ and members in particular. And God has set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?* God intended that there should be different offices in His Church. Let us look on each other as being different and yet united in the common faith of Christ.

31. *But covet earnestly the best gifts.* I would not wish you, Brothers, to repress your aspirations after these blessings. I am most anxious that you should earnestly desire and seek to possess a large share of all these spiritual endowments.

31. *And yet show I unto you a more excellent way.* Which is, holding the Truth of God in love and walking in charity, one toward another.

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

UNPARALLELED SUFFERING
NO. 2573

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 5, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 4, 1883.

"Christ also has once suffered."
1 Peter 3:18.

IT is very unpleasant to our poor flesh and blood to suffer. Physical pain is a grievous infliction—mental agony or spiritual sorrow is still worse. Irons around the wrists can be worn till they fit easily, but when the iron enters into the soul, how it rusts the heart and eats into the spirit! Perhaps, to some minds, the most difficult of all suffering is that which is not deserved at all, but which comes because we do *not* deserve it. I mean that suffering which innocent persons are called to endure because of their innocence when they are slandered and oppressed and persecuted, not for evil-doing, but for well-doing. I admit that there is much about this form of trial which should tend to make it a light affliction, for we ought to take it joyfully when we suffer wrongfully. Yet, as a rule, we are not able to do so. Certainly not by nature, for there is a sort of sense of justice within man which makes him feel that it is very hard that he should have to suffer, not for unrighteousness, but for righteousness—not for any wrong-doing, but for having espoused the cause of God and His Truth.

The Apostle Peter would have Christians prepare themselves for this suffering. They had to bear very much of it in his day—they will have to bear some of it as long as the Church of Christ remains in this wicked world. He says, in the verse preceding our text, "It is better, if the will of God is so, that you suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing." Further on, at the beginning of the next chapter, he says, "Forasmuch, then, as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves, likewise, with the same mind." He warns us that we shall need to be clad in heavenly armor, for we shall have to pass through conflict and suffering for Christ's sake and for righteousness' sake. We must put on a coat of mail and be enveloped in the whole panoply of God. We must have, as our great controlling princip1e, the mind of Christ, that, as He endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, we, also, may endure it and not be weary or faint in our minds. We shall best bear our own sufferings when we find fellowship with Christ in them. Therefore, it is for your strengthening, that your spiritual sinews may be braced, that you may be armed from head to foot and preserved from the darts of the enemy that I would set forth before you, as best I may, the matchless sufferings of the Son of

God, who, "once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

It has sometimes struck me that the first Epistle of Peter is greatly concerning Christ's First Advent and that his second Epistle tells us about our Lord's Second Advent. In this first letter there are many references to the sufferings of Christ. It may interest you to notice some of them. In the first Chapter, at the 11th Verse, we read, "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ." When the Apostle gets to the second Chapter, at the 21st Verse, we find him writing thus, "For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps." Next comes our text in the third Chapter. Then, in the Fourth chapter, at the first Verse, is the passage I have already read to you. [See Exposition at end of sermon.] And in the 13th Verse, the Apostle says, "Rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings." And in the 5th Chapter, at the first Verse, he calls himself, "a witness of the sufferings of Christ." Thus his frequent expression—his peculiar idiom—is, "the sufferings of Christ" and, in the language of our text he thus describes the great work of our redemption—"Christ also has once suffered," It may seem a very small thing to you to call your attention to such words as these, but it does not appear small to me. It seems to me that there is a great depth of meaning within these few words and it shall be my objective, at this time, to bring out that meaning, as far as I can, under the Holy Spirit's guidance.

I. Notice then, first of all, A SUMMARY WITHOUT ANY DETAILS—"Christ also has once suffered." There is compassed within that expression a summary of the whole life and death of Christ! The Apostle does not give us details of Christ's sufferings, but he lets us, for a moment, look into this condensation of them—"Christ also has once suffered."

It is *the epitome of His whole earthly existence* up to the time of His rising from the dead. Christ begins His life here with suffering. He is born into the world, but there is "no room for Him in the inn." He must lie in a manger where the horned oxen feed. He is born of a poor mother. He must know the ills of poverty and, worse still, Herod seeks the young Child's life. He must be hurried away by night into Egypt. He must be a stranger in a strange land, with His life in peril from a blood-thirsty tyrant! When He comes back from Egypt, He grows in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men—but you may rest assured that the years He spent in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, though we are not told about them, were years of sore travail—perhaps of bodily pain, certainly of mental toil and preparation for His future service. Such a public life as His could not have been lived without due training. I will not attempt to lift the veil where God has let it fall, but I see, in the whole public ministry of Christ, traces of a wonderful mental discipline through which He must have gone and which, I should think, must have involved Him in suffering. Certainly it was one main point in His preparation that He was not without spiritual conflicts and struggles which must have involved suffering to such a nature as His was.

No sooner does He appear on the stage of action and the Spirit of God descends upon Him in the waters of Baptism, than He is hurried off to a forty days' fast in the wilderness and to a prolonged and terrible conflict with His great enemy and ours. Of that time we may truly say that "*He suffered, being tempted*." Throughout His life you may read such words as these—"Jesus, being weary, sat thus on the well." "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." And then you can understand some of the ways in which He suffered. We cannot tell how much our Lord suffered even in the brightest portion of His career, for always was He "despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." We cannot go into all the details of His life, but I think you may see that even in the very smoothest part of it, He suffered. And Peter does well to thus sum it up—"Christ suffered."

But when He comes to *Gethsemane,* shall I speak of the bloody sweat and the groans which startled angels? No, I need not say more than this—"Christ suffered." Shall I tell of His betrayal by Judas, of His being hurried from court to court, falsely accused, despitefully entreated, bruised, scourged and made nothing of? Truly, I may sum it all up by saying that He suffered! And as for all the rest, that march along the *Via Dolorosa*—that fastening to the wood—that uplifting of the Cross. The wounds, the cruel fever, the direful thirst, the mockery, the scorn, the desertion of His Father when He must, at last, yield Himself up to death itself—what better summary could even an inspired Apostle give than to say—"Christ also has once suffered"? This expression sums up the whole of His life.

It is well for you and for me, when we have the time and the opportunity, to make as complete as possible our knowledge of Christ as to all the details of His life and death. But, just now, it must suffice us, as it sufficed Peter, to say, "Christ suffered." When next you are called to suffer, when pains of body oppress you, let this text whisper in your ears, "Christ also has once suffered." When you are poor, needy and homeless, remember that "Christ also has once suffered." And when you come even to the agony of death, if such shall be your portion, then still hear the soft whisper, "Christ also has once suffered." I know of no better armor for you than this—"Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind"—and be prepared to count it your honor and glory to follow your Master with your cross upon your shoulders!

Much may be said to be known concerning Christ's sufferings, but still, to a great extent, they are unknown sufferings. Some eyes saw Him suffer, yet I might truly say, "Eye has not seen, neither has ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man the things which Christ suffered for His people." You may think, Brothers and Sisters, that you know something of Christ's sufferings, but they are a unfathomably deep, a height to which the human imagination cannot soar! We are obliged to leave this summary without any details. "Christ also has once suffered."—

"Much we talk of Jesus' blood,
But, how little's understood!

Of His sufferings, so intense,
Angels have no perfect sense.
Who can rightly comprehend
Their beginning or their end?
'Tis to God and God alone
That their weight is fully known."

II. Secondly, this is A STATEMENT WITHOUT ANY LIMIT. How indefinitely it is put! "Christ also has once suffered."

Do you ask the question, "*When did Christ suffer*?" It is answered by not being answered, for, truly, we may reply to you—"When Christ was on earth, when was there that He did not suffer?" "Christ also has once suffered." The Apostle adds no note of time. He says not, "Christ suffered on the Cross, or in the garden," but the very indefiniteness of the statement leaves us to understand that as long as Jesus was here, He was the acquaintance of grief. His life was, in a sense, a life of suffering. All the while He was here, even when He was not upon the Cross, and even when no bloody sweat was on His brow, it is written, "He, Himself, took our infirmities and bore our sickness." He was bearing the lead, not, as some say, "on the tree" alone, but *up to the tree,* as the passage may be read—daily bearing it till, at length, He came to the Cross—and there it was for the last time that He felt the pressure of human sin. You cannot get and yet you do, in some sense, get, from my text, an answer to the question, "When did Christ suffer?"

Perhaps another asks, "*What did Christ suffer*?" The text is remarkable in giving no limit whatever to the statement. "Christ also has once suffered." What did He suffer? I answer—what was there that He did *not* suffer in body, in mind, and in spirit? What of pain—what of shame—what of 1oss—what of hatred—what of derision? He suffered from Hell, from earth, from Heaven—I was going to say—from time and from eternity, for there was a certain sense in which eternal pangs passed through the heart of Christ and spent themselves upon Him. What did He suffer? Peter says, as if that should be enough for us to know, "Christ has once suffered"—the very indefiniteness implies that He suffered everything that He could suffer.

And *where did Christ suffer?* Peter does not answer that question. Where did He suffer? In the wilderness? In the garden? In Pilate's Hall? On the Cross? The text as good as says, "No. Yes. Not somewhere only, but everywhere!" Wherever He was, Christ was enduring that great burden which He came into the world to bear till He would carry it away and it should be lost forever.

From whom did Christ suffer? Mark how unlimited is the text—"Christ also has once suffered." From men falsely accusing Him and slandering Him? Yes, and that is the comfort of His slandered people. But He suffered not from only wicked men, but even from good men—the best of His disciples cost Him many pangs and sometimes made His heart ache. He suffered from devils. He suffered from the Father, Himself! There it stands—a sky without horizon—a sea across which I look and see no end—"Christ also has once suffered." I think that Joseph Hart spoke well when he said that Christ—

"Bore all Incarnate God could bear,

With strength enough, and none to spare."

So we leave this part of our theme. It is a statement without any limit. "Christ also has once suffered."

III. Now I want you to notice, in the third place, that this is A DESCRIPTION WITHOUT ANY ADDITION. "Christ also has once suffered."

Is that all? Was there not something else? No. This line sweeps the entire circumference. There was nothing in Christ, *before His suffering,* which was contrary to it. He never regretted that He had entered upon a course which involved suffering. "When the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," warning His followers that He was going there to be mocked, to be scourged and to be crucified. He might at any moment have relinquished His terrible task, but that idea never entered into His mind. Even when He came near to the worst part of His pain and His human Nature shrank from it, His true heart never was discouraged or thought of turning back. He said, "The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" And He did drink it, though it involved more suffering than we can imagine! Yet there was no resistance to that suffering. He suffered, but He never rebelled against it. He could truly say, "I was not rebellious, neither turned back." He did not even complain and Isaiah's prophecy was literally fulfilled by Him—"He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth."

If we were to describe the experiences of even the best of men, I am afraid that we would have to say, "He suffered very much and he did not often murmur. Sometimes, however, he rebelled and cried out." It was not so with Christ. Peter says, He suffered and there is no addition to that. You know, my Brothers and Sisters, how, having undertaken to suffer for sins, He went through with it. If He stood before Pilate and His enemies smote Him, what did He do? He suffered. If they bound His eyes and buffeted Him, what did He do? He suffered. When they spat in His face, what did He do? He suffered. When they nailed Him to the Cross, what words did He speak against His murderers? Not one! He suffered. "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again." Even when they jested at Him, His only reply was the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He suffered and there was nothing to take away from the completeness of that suffering. The whole of His Nature ran out into that act of obedience called suffering! It was the time when He must do the Father's will by suffering—and all the power of His Being ran into that channel. The Lord had made to meet upon Him the iniquity and, consequently, the *suffering of us all*! And He just accepted it at the Father's hand without a complaint or a murmur. You can sum it all up in the language of our text, without a single word added to it—"Christ also has once *suffered*."

IV. Once more, I want you to notice that this is A DECLARATION WITHOUT ANY QUALIFICATION. "Christ suffered."

There is no word to bid us imagine that He had *any alleviation of His agony.* Of a person in very bad health we may be able to say, "He suffers a great deal, but he has an excellent medical attendant, a good nurse

and he has every comfort that can be given to him." But, in the case of our Lord, all is summed up in these two words, "*Christ suffered.*" Were there no comforters? No. He suffered. Was there no sleeping-draught to deaden His pain? No. He suffered. But did not His Father help Him in the hour of His agony? No. His cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" proves that we may say of Him, even with reference to God, that He suffered! The death of Christ was quite unique—none of the martyrs were ever brought into the same condition as their Lord was in.

I remember reading in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs,* the story of a man of God who was bound to a stake to die for Christ. There he was, calm and quiet, till his legs had been burned away and the bystanders looked to see his helpless body drop from the chains. He was black as coal and not a feature could be discerned. But one who was near was greatly surprised to see that poor black carcass open its mouth and two words came out of it! And what do you suppose they were? "Sweet Jesus!" And then the martyr fell over the chains and, at last, his life was gone. Oh, how much of the blessed Presence of God that poor saint must have had to be able to say, at the last, when he was charred to a coal, "Sweet Jesus!"

But the Lord Jesus had not that help and comfort. His Father's Countenance was hidden from Him. "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani," is such a shriek as even Hell itself has never heard, for the lost ones there have never known what it was to have the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, as Christ had known it and, therefore, they could never know the loss of it as Christ knew it in that supreme moment of His agony. "Christ suffered." That is all you can say of Him, He suffered, without any alleviation of His pain.

Further, He suffered *without any qualification in the sense of being compelled to suffer.* We say of such-and-such a person, "He suffers greatly, but he cannot help suffering. He has a deadly disease, the pain of which cannot be alleviated. He is, therefore, obliged to bear it." The martyr, whom I mentioned just now, was bound to the stake—he could not get away—he suffered under compulsion. He was made to suffer. But you cannot say that of Christ. Herein is a marvelous thing, that while Christ suffered, you may take the word in the active sense. I do not know how exactly to express my meaning, but there is a sort of passive sense in which He suffered—that is the sense in which we all suffer according to our share—but Jesus also suffered in an active sense. That is to say, He suffered willingly, resolutely, without any compulsion. At any moment He might have broken loose from the Cross! He might have called for 12 legions of angels and scattered all His foes. He might have flung off His body and appeared before them as a Consuming Fire to utterly destroy them!

Or, retaining His Humanity, He might have smitten them with blindness, or worked some other miracle and so have escaped from them. If we should be called to die for Christ, it would only be paying the debt of nature a little beforehand, for we are bound to die sooner or later—it is the lot of man. But there was no such need in the case of Christ! There was no necessity of death about that Holy Thing which was born of the

Virgin Mary! It would not corrupt and it needed not to die. All the way through His death, remember that He did not die as we do—gradually losing consciousness, floating away and never able to suspend the process of dissolution—but, at any instant, up to the final committal of His spirit to His Father, He could have caused all those pains to cease! Now see with what an extraordinary meaning my text is girt about. As the painters foolishly depict Christ with a halo around His head which was never there, I may truly picture His sufferings, mystically and spiritually, with a halo about them which is really there, for He suffered in this superhuman fashion, without any qualification as to alleviation or as to compulsion!

Dear Friends, how shall I speak further upon this part of my subject? Only this word would I add—that "Christ suffered" *without any desert.* If we suffer, we must say to ourselves that we suffer less than we deserve, and even when a man suffers so as to die, we know that death is the penalty of sin. But "Christ suffered" in a very special sense because "in Him was no sin." He had never done anything worthy of death, or of bonds. He suffered "for sins not His own." There was nothing about Him that brought the suffering upon Him—His was the suffering of a pure and holy Being. We say of a criminal, not so much that he suffers, but that he is punished, He is executed, He is put to death. We never say that of Christ—we say that He suffered—voluntarily and without any obligation on account of demerit. He comes and takes upon Himself the sins of His people, stands in their place, is chastened with their chastisements, is smitten with their smiting. Well does He say, by the mouth of the Psalmist, "Many a time have they afflicted Me from My youth: yet they have not prevailed against Me. The plowers plowed upon My back: they made long their furrows." So indeed they did, not only on His back, but on His heart!

I am speaking now, not only of His external but of His internal sufferings. Truly did one say that "the sufferings of Christ's soul were the very soul of His sufferings." And so, no doubt, they were. But, in His case, there was no punishment due to Him, so in His sufferings there was nothing exacted from Him on His own account. I must leave you to think upon this great mystery, for I cannot speak of it as it deserves.

V. I close with this last reflection. My text is AN EXPRESSION WITH AN EMPHASIS. "Christ also has once suffered."

When we think of our own sufferings, as compared with our Lord's, we may print them in the smallest type that the printer can use. But where shall I find capital letters that are large enough to print this sentence when it applies to Him—"CHRIST ALSO HAS ONCE SUFFERED"? It is almost as if the Apostle said, "You have, none of you, suffered when compared with Him." Or, at least, He was the Arch-Sufferer—the Prince of Sufferers—the Emperor of the Realm of Agony—Lord Paramount in sorrow. Just take that term, "a Man of *Sorrows*." You know that in the Book of Revelation, there is the expression, "the man of sin." What does, "the man of sin" mean but a man made up of sin, one who is all sin? Very well, then, "a Man of Sorrows" means a Man made up of sorrows, constructed of sorrows—sorrows from the crown of His head to the sole

of His feet—sorrow without and sorrow within. He did sleep with sorrow and wake with sorrow—Christ was a Man of Sorrows, a *mass* of sorrow.

Take the next expression, "and acquainted with grief." Grief was His familiar acquaintance, not a person that He passed by and casually addressed, but His acquaintance that kept close to Him throughout His life. He said once, "Lover and friend have You put far from Me, and My acquaintance into darkness." But this acquaintance was with Him there—"acquainted with grief." Listen to the words and if you can see my Lord pressed by the strong arm of grief until He is covered all over with a gory shirt of bloody sweat, then you know that grief had made Him to be acquainted with its desperate tugs. When you see Him bleeding from His hands, feet and side, with all His spirit exceedingly sorrowful even unto death—and God, Himself, leaving Him in the thick darkness—then you know that He was, indeed, acquainted with grief! You know a little about grief, but you do not know much. The hem of Grief's garment is all you ever touch, but Christ wore it as His daily robe! We do but sip of the cup—He drank it to its bitterest dregs. We feel just a little of the warmth of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, but He dwelt in the very midst of the fire!

There I must leave the whole matter with you. But as you come to the Communion Table, come with this one thought upon you—"Christ also has once suffered." Somebody, perhaps, asks me, "Is there any comfort in that thought?" Is it not an amazing thing that there should be more of comfort in the sufferings of Christ than in any other thing under Heaven? Yet it is so—there is more joy in the sufferings of Christ, to those whose hearts are broken, or sorely wounded—than there is in His birth, or His resurrection, or anything else about the Savior! It is by His stripes rather than even by His glory that we are healed! Come, Beloved, take a draught from this bitter wine, which shall sweetly charm away all your sorrows and make you glad! May God the Holy Spirit grant that it may be so!

And if there is anybody here who is not saved, remember, Friend, that your salvation depends upon the sufferings of Christ. If you believe on Him, then His sufferings are yours—they have taken away your sin and you are clear! Therefore, go your way and be glad.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 27; ROMANS 8:14-17.

Psalm 27:1. *The Lord is my light and my salvation;* First comes light and then salvation. We are not saved in ignorance. The knowledge of our sinfulness is revealed to us—we discover our true condition in the sight of God—and then we perceive the mercy and the love of God. We see first the light and then the fullness of salvation, for this is not a matter of the past only, but of the present. At this very hour, each Believer can say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation." Can *you* say that, dear Friend? If so, there is more real eloquence in that little sentence than in all the orations of Cicero!

1. *Whom shall I fear?* "There is nobody that I have any need to fear. I need not fear the powers of darkness, for 'the Lord is my light.' I need not fear damnation, for 'the Lord is my salvation.' Then, 'Whom shall I fear?'"

1. *The LORD is the strength of my life.* Is not that a wonderful expression? Ordinarily, a man lives by the strength of his constitution, but the spiritual life lives by the strength of God within the soul.

1. *Of whom shall I be afraid.* "For, if God is my strength, then am I strong as Samson, and I may slay the lion or the Philistines with equal ease."

2. *When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.* Good men have enemies because they are good men. There are two classes in the world—the righteous and the wicked—the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. And you know that even in Eden, the Lord said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed." We must expect, then, if we are among the righteous, that we shall be attacked by the wicked. But, when they come against us, we may believe that they shall be overcome even before we strike a single blow in our own defense!

3. *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.* You know that, usually, we fear just before the battle begins—when we see the enemy encamped against us. We do not know what they are going to do and we are sure to imagine the very worst. But such was David's confidence in his God that he said, "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear." There they lie, their legions marshaled against him in all their dread array! But says the Psalmist, "In this will I be confident." Oh, the joy of the man who has received this confidence from God and who is, therefore—

"Calm 'mid the bewildering cry,
Confident of victory."

4. *One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in His Temple.* Did David refer to any special spot, or to any one sacred shrine? I think not. He meant that he wished to be always at home with God. And, you know, at the same time we can also be in our own houses or in the fields, on the land or on the sea. This was David's great desire, that he might always dwell with God, like a child at home, wherever he was. And that he might have such communion with God that he might "behold the beauty of the Lord," that he might ask of God guidance in all his difficulties, "and to enquire in His Temple." Those are two things, dear Friends, for which I hope many of us have come here—that we may behold God's graciousness and loveliness in the ordinances of His sanctuary—and that we may ask and receive of Him help in all our difficulties and guidance in all our dilemmas. How often, in this house, has God spoken so personally to His dear children that they have thought that the preacher knew all about them, when he really knew nothing whatever of them, though God did, and sent a message by His servant, straight to their souls!

5. *For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock.* If I dwell with God, He will hide me away in the pavilion of His Sovereignty

and, as long as He is King—and that will be forever and ever—He will not let me perish! His sword and shield shall be stretched out for my defense. Then God has also a tabernacle as well as a royal pavilion—as of old He had the Holy of Holies into which no man could enter, on pain of death, save only the High Priest on the appointed day. "In the time of trouble," the Lord Himself shall take us and hide us there by the Mercy Seat, near the Ark of the Covenant, where His Glory shall shine upon us, and where none can intrude to hurt us. We have the protection of the Pavilion of Sovereignty and the Tabernacle of Sacrifice—what two places can be safer? We have also the rock of God's Immutability—His people shall stand on that high mount, beyond the reach of their adversaries, where their feet shall never slide.

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.* This is a blessed resolution! Oh, that you and I would carry it out more and more! David says twice that He will sing the Lord's praises—"I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the Lord." Come, all you who sigh, change that word, and say, "I will sing." Come, all you who make a mourning noise, and ask the Lord to help you to make a joyful noise before His face! Is not praise comely and fitting in the Presence of such a God as He is who has dealt so well with us? Let each individual who knows the goodness of God say, "I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the Lord."

7. *Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.* The Psalmist has only just begun praising when he takes to praying—and that should be a Christian's double occupation—praising and praying! I have often said that as our life is made up of breathing in and breathing out, so we should breathe in the atmosphere of Heaven by prayer and then breathe it out, again, in praise—

"Prayer and praise, with sins forgiven,
Bring down to earth the bliss of Heaven!"

8. *When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, LORD, will I seek.* David springs forward to accept the Divine invitation which invitation was general—"Seek you My face"—but the response was personal, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." Whether others would do so, or not, David resolved and declared that he would seek the face of the Lord! Let everyone of us, dear Friends, do the same.

9. *Hide not Your face far from me; put not Your servant away in anger—*

"Dismiss me not Your service, Lord."

You know how masters sometimes discharge their servants in anger. But what a gracious Master you and I have, Beloved, or else He would have sent us adrift long ago! "Get you gone," He would have said, "you disgrace My house, you mar My work, you do not perform your service well. Be gone!" But He does not speak or act in that fashion.

9, 10. *You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake we, then the LORD will take me up.* "They carried me when I was a child and He will carry me now! 'The Lord will take me up.' When they steel their hearts

against me, because I become a Christian, He will love me and more than make up my loss of their love."

11. *Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies.* "Lord, do not let me get into difficulties, so that I shall not know what to do, for my foes are so sharp-eyed that if they can find a fault in me, they will! And even if there is no fault, they will make one up. Therefore, Lord, '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.* Am I addressing anyone who is being slandered? Has somebody borne false witness against you? Well, be very thankful that it is false! I do not quite understand why it is so often said, "You see, it is such a downright lie and that is what grieves me so." But, dear Friend, it is much better that it should be false than true! If anyone brings an accusation against me, I shall be glad to find that it is false. Let not that be the sting of the trouble which really is the sweetness of it—be glad that they cannot say anything against you unless they speak falsely! However, if you expect to go to Heaven without being slandered, you expect what you are not likely to get, for God Himself was slandered in Paradise! Our Lord Jesus, in whom was no fault, was slandered when He was upon the earth—His Apostles and followers in all ages have had the same treatment! And here is David saying, "False witnesses are risen up against me."

13. *I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.* That is the point to be noted—there is no getting over fainting except by believing, for believing saves us from swooning and makes us strong—"I had fainted unless I had believed."

14. *Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart.* Here is a man of God giving us the benefit of his own experience! He waited upon God and now he bids us do the same, that we may be blessed as he was. At our Prayer Meeting before we came in here, one dear friend thanked the Lord that, for more than 60 years, he had been enabled to rest upon the Divine promises and he had never found one of them to fail in the hour of need. These testimonies are very precious. I remember, in my early Christian days, how my soul was greatly sustained by hearing a blind man say that he had lived on God by faith for more than 60 years, and he had found the Lord faithful to His promises all that time. Those of you, dear Friends, who are younger than others of us, may be comforted by the experience of your seniors! But if we were to live to be ten times as old as Methuselah, we would never find God backward in keeping His promises—He must be true whatever happens.

14. *Wait, I say, on the LORD.* Now let us read just a few verses to remind us of our union with our suffering Lord.

Romans 8:14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* You can judge yourself, dear Friend, by this test. Do you follow the Spirit's leading? Do you desire continually that He should be your supreme Guide and Leader? If you are led by the Spirit of God, then you have this highest of all privileges—you are one of the sons of God! Nothing can equal that honor! To be a son of God is more than anything

of which ungodly kings and emperors can boast, with all their array of pomp and wealth!

15. *For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.* You did receive it once and it was a great blessing to you. This came of the Law and the Law brought you under bondage through a sense of sin—and that made you first cry for liberty and then made you accept the liberating Savior. But you have not received that spirit of bondage again to fear.

15. *But you have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* We who believe in Jesus are all children of God and we dare to use that name which only children might use, "Abba." And we dare use it even in the Presence of God and to say to Him, "Abba, Father." We cannot help doing it because the spirit of adoption must have its own mode of speech—and its chosen way of speaking is to appeal to the great God by this name, "Abba, Father."

16. *The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* There are two witnesses, then, and in the mouth of these two witnesses the whole Truth of God about our adoption shall be established. Our own spirit—so changed as to be reconciled to God and led in ways which once it never trod—our own spirit bears witness that we are the sons of God. And then God's own Spirit bears witness, too, and so we become doubly sure!

17. *And if children, then heirs.* For all God's children are heirs and all equally heirs. The elder-born members of God's family, such as Abraham and the rest of the Patriarchs, are no more heirs of God than are we of these latter days who have but lately come to Christ! "If children, then heirs." Heirs of what?

17. *Heirs of God.* Not only heirs of what God chooses to give, but heirs of Himself! There need be nothing else said, if this is true! "The Lord is my portion, says my soul." "Heirs of God."

17. *And joint-heirs with Christ; if it is so that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.* Do you ever have in your heart a longing to behold the Glory of God? Do you feel pressed down when you see abounding sin? Are your eyes ready to be flooded with tears at the thought of the destruction of the ungodly? Then, you are having sympathy with Christ in His sufferings and you shall as certainly be an heir with Him, by-and-by, in His glory!

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

"PERSECUTED, BUT NOT FORSAKEN" NO. 2574

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 12, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 8, 1883.

"Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth. Let Israel now say: many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me. The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows. The Lord is righteous: He has cut asunder the cords of the wicked. Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion. Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withers before it grows up: which the mower fills not his hand; nor he that binds sheaves his arms. Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD be upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD."
Psalm 129.

YOU see, dear Friends, the Psalm speaks of two sorts of people—there is Israel and there are those that hate Zion. The first three verses are dedicated to God's people. The last five speak of those who are not God's people, but are the haters of them. From the very first, there have been two seeds in the world. The first man that was born—Cain, was of the seed of the serpent, but the second was, by the Grace of God, of the seed of the woman. And so early, when those two boys had but just developed into manhood, he that was born by Grace served his God and brought a lamb as his sacrifice. But he that was born after the flesh—the firstborn of man—became his brother's murderer. Thus, in the very first household that ever existed, there was a sharp line of demarcation between the man of faith and the man of sense—the man that lived unto God and the man that lived after his own passions. Always and everywhere since that day there have been the same two characters and, albeit there is a large number of persons about whom you or I may not be able to give any decision, for they seem as if they stood between the two! Yet in the sight of God there is a line, narrow, but most sure, which divides the living from the dead—the believing from the unbelieving—the men that fear God from them that fear Him not.

And still, right down the ages, that Word that was spoken to the serpent in the Garden of Eden stands true—"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed." There are the believing people of God—His own elect brought out from among men, and there is the world that lies in the Wicked One. To one of these two classes we all belong—there are really no neutrals—it is not possible that there should be. There is no borderland between life and death—a man is ei-

ther alive by the quickening of the Spirit, or he remains dead in trespasses and sins.

I am going to speak of each of these two classes that are mentioned in my text. So, first, let us notice the description given of God's own people. The first three verses of the Psalm may be summed up thus—*Israel persecuted, but not forsaken.* When I have spoken on that theme, I shall hope to say something about *the wicked flourishing, but perishing.* Those two words—flourishing, perishing—describe the condition of those that hate Zion and that hate the children of Zion. Before I plunge into the text, however, let me give you a few sentences by way of introduction.

The life of the Lord Jesus Christ is the picture of the life of His people. "As He was," says Paul, "so are we, also, in this world." This is so remarkably true that, in the Psalms we sometimes can hardly tell whether the writer is describing himself or the Lord Jesus, because, as is the Head, so are the members, and there is a growing likeness which is often spoken of in Scripture as if these two were one, as indeed, in the highest sense, they are. If you read this Psalm carefully, you can see Christ in it. Jesus could truly say, "Many a time have they afflicted Me from My youth: yet they have not prevailed against Me." Herod sought the young Child's life to destroy it. Satan seemed to stir Hell, itself, to seek the destruction of the Infant Jesus. "The plowers plowed upon My back: they made long their furrows." How true was that of our Divine Master—when He was in His agony in the garden, the furrows were plainly visible! When He was brought before Herod, and before Pilate, and was scourged till He was covered with wounds—and when He died and they took down that blessed but mangled body—how deep were the furrows!

Now the sufferings of Christ, of which I spoke to you last Sunday night [See Sermon #2573, Volume 44—*Unparalleled Suffering*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] are, in their measure, repeated in His people—we are made to have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Shall the disciple be above his Master? Shall the servant be above his Lord? If they have persecuted Him, they will also persecute us! He bids us look for such treatment as this. Do not, therefore, expect rest where Christ had none, or look to wear a crown of gold where Christ wore a crown of thorns.

My next observation is that the history of God's people, Israel, is also, in type, a history of His Church. Truly, the sins of Israel are far too often repeated in Believers, but the woes and griefs of Israel, and their deliverance out of them, are the means of comfort to many of God's saints. See how the Israelites were afflicted from their youth, when they were but a little nation and went down into Egypt. How hard they had to work in the brick-kilns! With what enmity did Pharaoh look upon them! How cruelly and craftily he sought to compass the destruction of the nation by drowning the male children in the Nile! He used his wit and his power every way possible to destroy the chosen people—but the Lord preserved His own. Then, in the day of Israel's youth, when she went into the wilderness, she was afflicted. "I remember you," says God, "the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." But in the wilderness she had

her trials and when she came to the promised land, her trials did but begin again. Scarcely was she delivered from the Canaanites before she fell prey to the Philistines! And the Philistines were hardly overcome before we hear of the Syrians, the Edomites, the Moabites—and then of the Assyrians and the Babylonians who, at last, carried away captive the people of God. That nation, Israel, to this day may say, "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: but they have not prevailed against me."

Now one more remark. I have already reminded you that Christ's life is the picture of His people's life and that the history of Israel is the picture of His Church. Now notice how true it is that the Church, from her very outset, has always been afflicted—first by Herod, when he sought to slay the Apostles, and did murder James. Next afflicted by the Jews and driven from city to city. Then afflicted by Saul of Tarsus who breathed out threats and slaughter against the Church of Christ from her youth. Then broke out the great Pagan persecution. Your knowledge of history, I suppose, tells you how the emperors of Rome used the whole of their force to crush the Christian Church, yet they prevailed not against her! When the Roman emperors had done their worst, and done it in vain, the Church of Christ was turned into an established church by patronage—and from that moment became a harlot and so grew into the apostate Church of Rome!

Then the Pope, with all his might, sought to crush out the Church of God. Read the stories of the Albigenses in the South of France, the Waldenses in the valleys of Piedmont. Read the history of the Lollards in England and of the saints of God in any country which you please to choose. They were torn asunder. They were made to rot in prison. They were tortured on the rack. They were put to death in all manner of ways. In our own country, especially, by being burned to death at the stake. Yet the enemies of Zion have not prevailed against her. No, Rome, you shall never triumph! And even now, though today our clergy preach your doctrines and wear your garments, yet you shall not prevail against the Church of God, for He shall surely come, even He that has delivered in days gone by, and shall work deliverance for His Israel once again!

So I have spoken to you of Christ, of Israel, and of the Church. Now I come to deal with the subject as it relates to yourselves. As it was with the Church at large, as it was with Israel, as it was with our Lord Jesus, so expect it to be with you! As I go through this Psalm with you, and dwell upon it, you can apply it to yourself, my dear tried and persecuted Friend.

I. In the first three verses of the Psalm, we have a description of ISRAEL PERSECUTED, BUT NOT FORSAKEN.

First notice, concerning Israel's affliction, *from where it came*— "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth." Who was it that afflicted Israel? The text says, "*they*." And why is the word, "they," used? Because, to enter into particulars would rather obscure the sense than impress anything upon the memory. "They." Why, it meant, in the case of the nation of Israel, Egyptians, Amalekites, Hivites, Hittites, Jebusites, Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians—it would be such a long list—so the

Psalmist just says, "they." Who are the people that have afflicted you, my dear Friend? The Scripture leaves room for you to add the names if you care to put them in. But perhaps it will be wiser for you to forget all the names and simply to leave it as it is here—"Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth."

I hardly like to think of who they are, who, in many cases, have afflicted God's true servants, but it is still true that "a man's foes shall be they of his own household." A woman is just brought to Christ and her greatest trouble comes from him whom she loves best of all living mortals—her husband becomes her terror! When a child has been brought to the Savior, it is sad that his worst fears should arise concerning the treatment he will receive from his father or his mother—but it has often been so. We do not put the names in—we can pray for the persecutors all the better if we leave it, "they." A newly-converted Christian goes out into business. Does he find friends there? Sometimes God is very tender and pitiful, and casts the lot of his young children in among the gracious. But there are others who have a hard time of it, for they have to earn their bread in the midst of the ungodly. Christ seems to say to them, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." And these wolves are always seeking to destroy the lambs, if possible! Is it not a singular thing in Providence that though the wolves might have eaten all the lambs up long ago, yet there are a great many more sheep in the world, now, than there are wolves? And in this country, you know, there is not a wolf left—they have all died out. They could take care of themselves and fight, yet they have all gone. The sheep could not defend themselves, yet here they are in flocks! God takes care of the weak and the feeble—and in that very fact of natural history He seems to say to His people, "'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.' When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. 'The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.'"

Outside, in the world, the Christian frequently meets with those who would rejoice to see him stumble, who try to make faults where there are none and exaggerate little mistakes into great crimes. Wherever he goes, he has to travel with his sword drawn—he finds an adversary behind every bush. He is a pilgrim through the midst of Vanity Fair whom the traders cannot understand. In his case, that ancient word is again fulfilled—"My heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her." Such a man can truly say, "Many a time have they afflicted me."

But, next, let us ask, *how does this persecution come?* The Psalm says, "Many a time." That means very often. So then, you who are faithful to God must expect that you will frequently be assailed by the foe. I know some of God's saints who feel almost frightened when people speak well of them. They begin to say, "What have we been doing wrong? Would these people commend us if we had been serving our Master faithfully?" There is another side to that truth, for, "when a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." But, between the two, it is not always easy to tell which is the right course. This we know—we are not to expect to find favor where Christ found no favor! If

they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, we must expect that they will have ill names for us. If they imputed evil motives to Him, they will impute evil motives to us. If they even said of Him that He was a drunk and a wine-bibber, we must not be astonished if sometimes things of which we have never heard, or things that we abhor, should be laid to our charge! Therefore, arm yourselves, also, with the same mind as Christ had, who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself many and many a time.

The Psalm tells us that these attacks of the ungodly were a real affliction to the people of God. "Many a time have they afflicted me. . .Many a time have they afflicted me." It is written twice over to show how trying it was. The brine made poor Israel's wounds smart. She was really hurt and she felt it. I have sometimes met with a person who has said, "I do not care what people say of me." I am not sure whether that feeling is right, or wrong. Sometimes it may be an indifference which is pitiable. At other times it may be a courage which is admirable. But this I do know, that the saints of God have found slander to be a very piercing thing—it has gone right to their heart—the iron has entered into their soul. Hence the Savior said to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled," for trouble tries, sometimes, to get to the heart. Affliction that does not really afflict is no affliction. But here they felt it. They groaned under it. The plowers made deep furrows, not mere surface ones—they cut down deep into the very spirit, into the very soul of Israel. And we must not wonder if, sometimes, for Christ's sake, we have to meet with this kind of trial.

Possibly, some Christian sitting here is saying, "I do not know much about that sort of affliction." Well, be very thankful if you do not, but be ready for it—be prepared for it. There are some of us who had a hard time of it in years gone by. There was not any name in the catalog of contempt which some of us have not been made to bear. And now, perhaps, we have smoother times, but we stand quite ready to go into the burning fiery furnace, again, if so it must be, for this is a part of the portion of God's servants—"Many a time have they afflicted me . . . Many a time have they afflicted me."

But notice, while we are speaking of how affliction came to Israel, that it came to her in her youth. What a coward Satan is! He always tries to attack God's children most fiercely when they are young. Fight one of your own size, Sir! But that he is afraid to do. When the child of God gets well matured and, by experience knows how to fly to his God, Satan will often leave him quietly alone. You know the story in the Revelation of how, when the woman was delivered of a Man-Child, the dragon sought to destroy the Child at once and it was, therefore, caught up unto God, and to His Throne. No sooner did the devil spy out Christ, as He rose dripping from the waters of Baptism, than he determined to assail Him with his fierce temptations and, if possible, destroy Him before He began His ministry! But that young Christ, freshly anointed of the Spirit, was more than a match for him. Many a time since then has the Adversary met God's people in their youth, when as yet they were feeble—when they were not expert in war, just as David in his youth had to fight the lion and the bear, and *afterwards* to meet the giant.

Oh, it was grand for that ruddy youth to be able to say to Saul, "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God." It may be so with you who are young in Grace—do not be astonished if you meet with your fiercest attacks in the morning of your days! But have courage and say to yourself, "It was told me that it would probably be so. I am not taken at unawares, I was warned of that as I read the Psalm, 'Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me.'"

Notice again that the Psalm goes on to describe this persecution of Israel under the imagery of plowers plowing her back. It is a kind of duplicate metaphor. It is just as the scourger, when he takes his dreadful lash and brings it down with all his might on the bare back of his victim, makes a deep gash where the throng falls. And it is also like the furrow that is cut by a plow, only it is not made in dead clods, it is right in the quivering flesh! The scourge falls again and there is another mark—again you can hear the dreadful motion of the whip of wire as it falls and cuts deeper and deeper into that poor sensitive bleeding back.

Now, just so, Israel says, it was with her, and you know that it was so, for she seemed to be all but destroyed many times. That little nation was hacked to pieces. Zion was plowed as a field. So is it with some of God's people—as it was, also, with their Master, and as it has been with the entire Church of Christ. The whip has come down mercilessly again and again and again—forty stripes save one—for Satan will never stint his blows. He will vex God's people again and again and again, and if he could, he would utterly destroy them. Such often has been the lives of God's saints—the very best and truest of them—and such are their lives now. It is not so with all of us, but it has been so with many. May the Lord help His suffering people! In patience may they possess their souls! As I remind you of what some of our Brothers and Sisters in Christ are just now suffering, I pray you to remember those that are in bonds as bound with them, and those that are in trouble, knowing that you, yourselves, also are yet in the body.

This, then, is the description of what God's people have often had to suffer. The plowers have made long their furrows—they have left no headlands—they have plowed the back again and again—and scourged it with the cruel lash.

But now, *what is the reason for all this persecution?* There are two reasons. And the first is the hatred of the serpent and his seed. There are two things that are inconceivable in length and breadth. The first is the love of God to His people, which is altogether without limit. And the next is the hatred of the devil, which is and must be finite, for he is only a creature, but still, it is as great as it possibly can be. We have no idea with what determined vehemence Satan hates these who belong to Christ! He will do anything he can in the hope of destroying one of them. He goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. That, Beloved, is why you have so many persecutions from those who are the faithful children of Satan—they are of their father, the devil, and his

works they will continue to do—and one of those works is persecuting those who are the children of God.

Still, there is a higher reason for the persecution of the saints. The second reason is because God permits it. Why does He permit it? Well, very often for your safety. "For our safety?" you ask. "For our safety?" Yes, the Church of God has often been preserved by persecution—she was never purer, she was never holier, she was never truer and she never lived nearer to God and more like her Savior than when she was persecuted! I venture to say of the Church of Scotland that she was never grander than in the Covenanting times when they met among the glens and up in the lone places when she sat on the heather watching, lest Claverhouse's dragoons should be near. I think, of late years, she was never nobler than in Disruption times, and I believe she will never again be so good and great unless she is persecuted.

Often we do not prosper in spiritual things, in times of ease, as we ought to do. Sometimes, the best friend of the sheep is the dog—and when the shepherd lets him loose, he fetches back the wanderers. And if there are any animals that ought not to be with the flock, the dog gets in among them and makes the separation between his master's sheep and other people's. We owe a great deal to persecuting dogs! I knew a young man who used to steal in here on Thursday nights and who would come into the Prayer Meetings and pray very sweetly and very earnestly. But he had no comfort in his home, for he had a father who could not endure his religion and was very bitter against him. His father died and the son inherited his property. He is never here, now. He has no love for God, as far as I can judge. He has grown cold and has turned aside, but as long as he was persecuted, he certainly seemed to be one of the most earnest men I ever knew! I believe that it has often been so, for silken days do not suit Christ's soldiers—but in the battle they will glory when their Master is with them. So you see how persecution is sometimes for our safety.

Next, it is for our trial and testing, to separate the precious from the vile. We are put into the sieve and Satan sifts us. He likes that task, but what a fool he is to do the sifting for Christ! It is good work when it is done and Satan, in persecuting the saints, is simply a scullion in Christ's kitchen, cleansing His pots and pans. They never are so bright as when he scours them and it is a scouring with a vengeance. Yet, in that way he separates, or God, *through him*, separates, between the precious and the vile! The Lord sometimes allows persecution to break out upon His people that they may know more of themselves. And oh, how we fail when we come to times of persecution! I have heard of one who, when he was condemned to die for the faith, got out of bed in the night and held his finger over the candle to see whether he could burn. Poor soul, he felt that he could not endure that pain, but yet he said, "I do verily believe that when I come to the stake, the agony which I cannot endure in my finger, now, I shall bear in my whole body, for then I shall be suffering God's will. Now, when I hold my finger in the candle, I am only suffering for my own curiosity and I get no support and strength."

And it was so. In Foxe's *Book of Martyrs,* the tale is told of a poor woman who was taken with the pains of travail when condemned to die

in prison. And when she cried out, her enemies said to her, "If you cannot bear this which is but natural, what will you do when you come to burn?" The woman answered, "Now, I am only suffering the curse that came upon the race through sin, and I feel it bitterly. But when I am burning at the stake, I shall be suffering for Christ's sake, and I shall feel it to be sweet." And it was noticed how bravely—to quote a strange phrase—*she played the man.* No, she played the WOMAN for Christ and suffered well for Him without tears or cries! Ah, yes, when God is with His people, He helps them wonderfully. But what a test it is to them and how they are driven at such times to prove their own weakness! How it tries their faith and proves of what stuff it is made! And how it makes them reel trembling and weak where they thought they were steadfast and strong!

I find that my time has nearly gone, yet I am not half-way through my subject. I must just mention *the blessings which come to the tried children of God through their troubles.* I do so enjoy the reading of that part of the Psalm where it says, "But they have not prevailed against me." You see a troop of horsemen riding into the very midst of the battle and you lose sight of them for a moment amidst the dust and smoke. But out of the middle of that cloud you hear the brave captain's cry, "They have not prevailed against me!" You see that little band advancing into a yet more crowded host, all glaring upon them like wolves. Surely they will be cut to pieces! But in the very center of the struggling mass you see the banner still waving and again comes the cry, "They have not prevailed against me!" That is, in brief, the story of the Church of Christ, and that shall be the story of every Christian who puts his trust in God—he shall have to say, at the close of every trouble—yes, and even in the midst of it—"They have not prevailed against me."

What is the reason why the enemy cannot prevail against the saints of God? Read the next verse. "The Lord is righteous." If He were to forsake His people and they were to perish, He would not be righteous. But He will not forget our work of faith and labor of love, nor will He leave us to fall in the evil day. "The Lord is righteous." That is to say, He will take the right side, He will defend those that fight for the right and for the truth, He will prove Himself strong on the behalf of them that put their trust in Him. "The Lord is righteous" and, therefore, He will smite His adversaries upon the cheekbone! He will not let them go on forever in their pride and cruelty. They get the upper hand for a while, and they smite His saints, but, "the Lord is righteous," and He will speedily avenge His own elect that cry day and night to Him! He may delay the overthrow of His people's foes, but He will, in the end, take their part and display His Almighty Power. For the present, He is patient. He bears long with the ungodly, but He will not always do so. The fact that "the Lord is righteous" is the pledge that the wicked shall not prevail over His saints.

Then notice the next sentence—"He has cut asunder the cords of the wicked." Literally, it should run thus—"He has cut the traces of the wicked." They are plowing, you see, and in the East, the oxen are fastened to the plow by a long cord. What does God do in the middle of their plowing? There are the bulls and there is the plow, but God has cut the har-

ness—and how wonderfully He has sometimes cut the harness of the persecutors of His people! Look at the way He did this for our poor hunted Brothers and Sisters in Piedmont. They were likely, every one of them, to be crushed and, apparently, there was nobody to protect them. The Duke of Savoy, whose subjects they were, had given them up to be destroyed. The next country was France, but the King of France was a Roman Catholic and as eager for their destruction as was the Duke. But one day, Oliver Cromwell sent for the French ambassador and said to him, "Tell your master to order the Duke of Savoy to leave off persecuting my brethren in Piedmont, or he shall hear from me about the matter." "Sir," said the ambassador, "they are not the subjects of the King of France. He has nothing to do with them. The Duke of Savoy is an independent prince—we cannot interfere with him." "I do not care about that," replied Cromwell. "I will hold your king answerable if he does not stop the Duke of Savoy from persecuting the Piedmontese."

And they knew that "Old Noll" meant what he said. So, somehow, the King of France managed to interfere with that precious independent prince and told him that he had better cease his persecutions, for if he did not, Oliver Cromwell would take up the quarrel. Yes, and when the Pope, himself, had persecuted some English sailors at Rome, Cromwell wrote and said that he did not know whether "his holiness" would like to hear the thunder of his guns at Rome, but he very soon would do so unless he ceased his cruelties. Cromwell was the defender of those that feared God, and it was most Providential that such a man should have come into power just when he was needed for the protection of the persecuted. God always knows how to save His people! What He has done in the past, He can do again. He can cut the traces of those that are plowing and there will be no more deep furrows. How frequently He has done it! How often has He put out His hand and said to the wicked, "Stop!" And they have had to stop and that has been the end of their persecution! Cry mightily, then, you who are tried! Cry mightily unto the Lord to deliver you!

Dearly Beloved, "avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord." Therefore, leave your persecutors in His hands. Be you like the anvil—there have been a great many generations of hammers that have come and have gone, but the old anvil still stands in the smithy! Be you just like that—let your persecutors hammer away, but stand you steadfast to your God and to your faith—and may His blessed Spirit keep you so even to the end!

The latter half of the sermon must come, if the Lord wills, on another Thursday night. May God's blessing be with you! Oh, happy are they that are God's people! Blessed are they that are in the furnace! Blessed are they that are tried and troubled! Has not He, whose lips can never lie, pronounced them blessed? "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs 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. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the

Prophets which were before you." Therefore, reckon yourselves gladdened and honored when you are counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GALATIANS 4, 5:1.

Galatians 4:1-5. *Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a servant, though he is lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.* Like little children, the Jewish Believers were under the Law. They observed this ceremony and that, just as children, though they may be heirs to vast estates, yet, while they are in their minority, are under tutors and governors. But now in Christ we have come of age and we have done with those schoolbooks and that tutorship, and we have received the adoption of sons! Now we have joy and peace in believing. We have begun to enter into our possession. We already have the earnest of it and, by-and-by, we shall receive the fullness of the inheritance of the saints in the Light of God.

6. *And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.* While the Jewish Believers, like children, were under the Law, they did not have such direct access to the Father as we have. They could not enter into such close fellowship with God as we now can. We who are the sons of God, really born into His family, feel within us a something that makes us call God, "Father," not only in prayer, saying, "Our Father, which are in Heaven," but, inwardly, when we are not in the attitude of prayer, our hearts keep on crying, "Father, Father." The Jew may say, "Abba," and the word is very sweet. But we cry, "Father," and it means the same thing.

7. *Therefore you are no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.* All God's sons are, in a certain sense, His servants, but there is a sense in which servants are not sons. We, therefore, are not like those servants who have no relationship to their master and no share in his possessions—we are sons. Whatever service we render, we are still sons, and we have a share in all that our Father has. We are heirs, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Are you living up to your privileges, Brothers and Sisters? Are we, any of us, fully realizing what this heirship means? Do we not often live as if we were only servants toiling for hire? Do we not tremble at God as if we were His slaves rather than His children? Let us remember that we are God's sons and daughters, His heirs, and let us come close to Him. Let us take possession of the blessed inheritance which He has provided for us.

8-11. *Therefore, then, when you knew not God, you did service unto them which by nature are not gods. But now, after that you have known God, or rather are known of God, why turn you, again, to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid for you, lest I*

have bestowed upon you labor in vain. Among the heathen, there were many "lucky" and, "unlucky" days—sacred days and days in which they indulged in sensual excess. They had even "holy" months and, "unholy" months. Now, all that kind of thing is done away with in the case of a Christian—he is set free from such weak and beggarly superstitions! Among the Jews there were certain sacred festivals—times that were more notable than other seasons—but they, also, were done away with in Christ. We observe the Christian Sabbath, but beyond that, to the true Believer, there should be no special observance of days, months and years. All that is a return to "the weak and beggarly elements" from which Christ has delivered us. That bondage is all ended, now, but there are some who still "observe days, and months, and times, and years." And Paul says to them, "I am afraid for you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." Every day is holy, every year is holy to a holy man! And every place is holy, too, to the man who brings a holy heart into it.

12. *Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as you are: you have not injured me at all.* "Be perfectly at home with me, for I am so with you. Though you Galatians have treated me very badly, yet you have not really injured me and I freely overlook your ill manners toward me."

13-15. *You know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the Gospel unto you at the first. And my trial which was in my flesh you despised not, nor rejected, but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is, then, the blessedness you spoke of? for I bear you record, that if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me.* The Apostle remembers how they received him at first. His Gospel was, to them, like life from the dead and though he was full of infirmities—perhaps had weak eyes—perhaps had a stammering tongue—perhaps was, at that time, very much depressed in spirit—yet, he says, "You received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. You loved me so much that, if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me."

16. *Have I, therefore, become your enemy because I tell you the truth?* There come times, with all God's servants, when certain people proclaim something fresh and new in doctrine—and then the old messenger of God who was blessed to them, comes to be despised. I have lived long enough to see dozens of very fine fancies started, but they have all come to nothing. I daresay I shall see a dozen more and they will all come to nothing. But here I stand—I am not led astray either by novelties of excitement or novelties of doctrine. The things which I preached at the first, I still preach, and so I shall continue, as God shall help me. But I know, in some little measure, what the Apostle meant when he said, "Have I, therefore, become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"

17-20. *They zealously affect you, but not well; yes, they would exclude you, that you might affect them. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ is formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.* The point of doubt was that they had been led astray by legal teachers—they had been made to believe that, after all, there was

something in outward ceremonies, something in the works of the Law and so they had come under bondage again. So the Apostle says—

21-23. *Tell me, you that desire to be under the Law, do you not hear the Law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh*—by Abraham's own strength—

24. *But he of the freewoman was by promise.* Born when Abraham and his wife were past age—born by the power of God's Spirit, according to promise.

24. *Which things are an allegory: for these are the two Covenants: the one from the mount Sinai which genders to bondage, which is Hagar.* It is the strength of the flesh which leads to bondage.

25, 26. *For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.* That is, of all of us who believe in Christ Jesus. We are born of the freewoman, not of the bondwoman—not born of the Covenant of Works and in the strength of the creature—but born of the Covenant of Grace, in the power of God, according to promise.

27, 28. *For it is written, Rejoice, you barren that bear not; break forth and cry, you that travail not: for the desolate has many more children than she which has an husband. Now we, Brothers and Sisters, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.* If we are God's children, it is not by our own strength, or by the strength of the flesh in any measure or degree—it is by the Grace of God and the promise of God—that we are what we are.

29, 30. *But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what says the Scripture?* Make a compromise, and be friends? Let Isaac and Ishmael live in the same house and lie in the same bed? No!

30, 31. *Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, Brothers and Sisters, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.*

Galatians 5:1. *Stand fast therefore in the liberty which Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.* God grant us Grace to keep to Grace! God grant us faith enough to live by faith, even to the end, as the freeborn children of God, 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.

A SERMON OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY NO. 2575

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JUNE 19, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 11, 1883.

(*One of the nights when the regular hearers left their seats to be occupied by strangers).*

"For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life."
Deuteronomy 32:47.

THESE are among the last words of Moses before his death. He addressed the people in a most tender and affectionate manner before he went from them. "The old man eloquent" seemed as if he would never leave off—he kept on reminding the children of Israel of the goodness of God to them and telling them what they might expect at His hands if they would but serve Him. He pleaded with all earnestness again and again and, at last, used this master argument why he would have them keep the ways of God, "For," he said, "it is not a vain thing for you"—it is a most essential thing—"because it is your life."

It is very clear, from this passage, that there were some people in the days of Moses who thought that it was a vain thing to serve the Lord. Yet those were very amazing times, for, if men rebelled against God, they were smitten with terrible sicknesses and, sometimes, with sudden death. God was then so manifestly in the midst of the camp that great miracles were often worked and men were compelled to stand still and say, "This is the finger of God." Besides, whenever men in those days kept God's ways, they prospered. That was the dispensation of temporal rewards and immediate punishments, yet, though it was so—though the very bush in the desert glowed with the Glory of the Godhead, though the mountains smoked and trembled beneath the touch of Deity, though the uplifted rod of Moses had caused the Red Sea to be divided and had fetched water out of the flinty rock—yet even when Jehovah was so conspicuously with His people, there were some among them who said, "It is a vain thing to serve the Lord." This proves that miracles will not convince men if the Gospel of Jesus Christ does not! And it also proves that if God were to make His religion a thing of eyes and hands, to be looked upon and to be handled, it would still be rejected by ungodly men, for their hearts are set against it and they are determined not to have God or Christ to rule over them!

Seeing that men thought it a vain thing to serve God in those olden times, I do not wonder that men should think the same now, for, in these

days there are not such manifest judgments upon wicked men, neither are there always such apparent rewards for the godly as there were under the Mosaic dispensation. Nowadays the righteous man is often sorely tried and troubled. Sometimes he has more tribulation than his ungodly neighbors have and his trials come even as the result of his serving God! On the other hand, does not the wicked man often prosper? Have we not seen him "spreading himself like a green bay tree," and covering the earth with his branches? This is the age of faith, in which God does not show Himself as He did in the olden time. It is the dispensation of spiritual things, wherein only spiritual men are cognizant of God's Presence and working. And, therefore, it is no marvel that many turn upon their heels and say, "There is nothing in religion! It is a vain thing to serve the Lord."

Now, dear Friends, I am not going to argue with you about this question, but I am going to bear my testimony concerning it. In a court of law, argument goes for much, but testimony is the thing which carries weight with the jury. They hear the evidence and if they believe that the witnesses are honest and truthful, they accept their testimony and give a verdict accordingly. If they have reason to think that the witnesses are only acting a part and speaking falsehood, they attach no importance to their evidence. I am going to give my testimony concerning the reality and blessedness of the religion of Jesus Christ, our Lord, in the hope that it will convince some of you of the truth of my text, "It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life."

I begin by admitting that there is a great deal of so-called religion that is a vain thing and that is nobody's life. The religion of ceremonies is a vain thing. If any man shall tell me that by any act of his, he can convey Divine Grace to me, I will not believe him! If he says that by the application of water, he creates within an infant, membership with Christ and makes that child to be an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven, I will not believe him! I shall attach no more importance to what he does, if he pretends to convey Grace by it, than I should to the *hocus-pocus of a gypsy*, or the *abracadabra of a magician*. God does not convey His Grace in that fashion, but by the working of His Spirit upon the mind, will and heart. True religion is not a thing that can be conveyed by water, or by bread and wine, apart from the state of mind and heart of the person receiving it. If my religion consists in putting on a certain dress and showing myself as a mere performer, or thinking that some good thing can come to the people by the sweetness of music, or the beauty of architecture, my religion is vain! It was not so with Christ and His Apostles—they went everywhere preaching the Word and proclaiming that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

Then again, a religion that consists in merely subscribing to a certain creed is a vain thing. Even if that creed were perfect, yet if your religion depended in simply believing it as a creed, it would not affect you to any real purpose. Religion is a life grounded upon belief, but salvation comes not to a man simply because he is orthodox. If his orthodoxy is merely a matter of the head—and all the while the heart remains unaffected, and the actions are unchanged—such a religion is a vain thing!

I have to also admit, with very great pain, that there is no doubt that a large portion of the religion of the present day—the religion that consists in a mere profession—is vain. If any man comes to this place and subscribes to the creed that I teach. If he is baptized with the Baptism of Scripture, itself, and if he is a most diligent man in all his devotions. Yet, if he does not truly trust in Christ—if his heart is not renewed by the Spirit of God, if his life is not a life of temperance, chastity, holiness and godliness—his religion is vain. It matters not that you are called Christians—the name to live is nothing—you must be spiritually alive! As our Lord told Nicodemus, "You must be born again." A man must be godly through and through—and when he is so, his religion is not vain.

It is to that religion I now want to bear my testimony as faithfully as I can. "For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life." I wish to give evidence in support of these four assertions. First, *it is no fiction.* Secondly, *it is no trifle.* Thirdly, *it is no folly.* Fourthly, *it is no speculation.* May the Holy Spirit help me to speak and you to hear!

I. First, then, concerning the religion that is our life, we declare that IT IS NO FICTION.

I speak on behalf of many who are present and of an almost innumerable company who are not present, and who could not be present, when I bear witness that having tried and tested the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have not found it to be a fiction! We were told that there was *God the Father* and we were bid to address Him in prayer as our Father. And we have found that, "like as a father pities his children," so the Lord has pitied us, loved us and cared for us. We must always speak as we find and we testify that since the day we sought His face, all the love of the best earthly father has been eclipsed by the love of God which He has manifested towards us. God the Father a fiction? Why, in the lives of some of us, He is the greatest and most potent of all factors! We could do without anyone or anything else except our Father who is in Heaven! We have often spoken with Him in prayer and in His Word He has spoken back to us. In the time of trouble, it is our joy to run to Him and cry, "Father!" And in our hours of need, He has supplied all our needs "according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus."

It is no use for any man to say that there is no such being as God, if he has never tried Him. There is no power in that kind of negative evidence! The Irish prisoner said to the judge, "There are three men who swear that they saw me kill the man, but I can bring 50 men to swear that they did not see me kill him." The judge soon exposed that fallacy, for there was no argument in it. If you say, "I do not know God, for I have never sought Him," we believe you, Friend, and we believe you with the deepest grief! And we wish that you thought us as honest as you are, yourself, when we reply that we have sought God's face and we are conscious, not by the sight of the eyes, or by the hearing of the ears, but by a new inward sense which God has given us, that in Him we live, move and have our being—and it is our joy to know that it is so!

Again, in the blessed Godhead *there is a second Person namely, Jesus Christ.* Have we ever found Him to be real? It seems to be a current notion, even in the Christian Church, that Jesus Christ is dead. But some

of us believe in a living Christ and well we may, for we went to Him all burdened with a sense of sin and, at the sight of Him on the Cross, our burden disappeared! And many another time have we gone to Him whenever that sense of sin has returned—and He has comforted us exceedingly with the abundance of His mercy. No Christ Jesus? Why, we have in secret had such fellowship with Him as a man has with his dearest friend! We could doubt our own existence sooner than we could doubt the supernatural Presence of Christ with true Believers! It matters not if others say that it is not so with them—their sad experience does not prove how it is with us—and we bear our witness that of all friends, the most real is Jesus of Nazareth, of all helpers and comforters, the truest and best we have ever found is Jesus Christ our Lord!

There yet remains another adorable Person in the Sacred Trinity—*the Holy Spirit*. Is there such a Person? Does He work upon the hearts of men? I speak now, not for dozens or hundreds, but for thousands, and for tens and hundreds of thousands, when I say that He has new-made us! He has illuminated us! He has comforted us. He has strengthened us. He has guided us. He has sanctified us. He is with us and we are conscious of His Presence and His Power. There are times when we are carried clean out of ourselves. We speak, you say, like men in a frenzy, though we are no more frenzied than you are! There are many of us who are no more fools than you are and who could prove to you, in any matter of business or of science, that we are your equals in intellect. And we aver most certainly that there is a Power beyond ourselves which has caused us to sing in the depths of sorrow, which has enabled us to rejoice when we have been racked with pain, which has made us sublimely calm when we have seemed to stand between the open jaws of death—and has carried us out of ourselves so that we have freely forgiven those who did us wrong, loved them all the better for their wrong-doing and sought their good the more—inasmuch as they have sought our hurt. Such action as this proves the Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit! He is no fiction to us—and to know the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—is to some of us the most real thing that ever was upon the face of the earth!

I could wish that some, who speak of godliness being all an action, had known what I once knew when I felt *conviction of sin*. I think that I am usually as cheerful as most men, but there was a time when no poor wretch on earth was more sunken in despair than I was. I knew that though but young, I had broken God's righteous Law and had grievously sinned against Him. And, under a sense of my guilt, I went about burdened day after day. If I slept, I dreamt of an angry God and thought that He would cast me forever into Hell. When I attended to my daily calling, the dreadful thought of my sin haunted and followed me wherever I went. If anyone had said to me, then, "Sin is a fiction," I could not have laughed him to scorn, for I was in no laughing humor, but I could have sat down and wept to think that anyone should fancy that this grim reality was, after all, but a matter of foolish fear or cowardly dread!

Conviction of sin was real enough to me! And so was *the joy of pardon,* for, one day, I heard it said, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the

ends of the earth," and it was explained to me that Christ, the Son of God, did take my sin and suffer for it, and that if I trusted Him, I might know that He had made a full atonement for me—and that I was clear of all guilt! I believed that message. It seemed to come to me straight from Heaven. I looked to Jesus and in a moment I leaped from the depths of despair to the heights of joyous confidence! I wanted to tell the assembled congregation that the witness of that humble preacher was true—that there was life in a look at the Crucified One—and life *at that moment* for all who looked to Him! If anyone had said to me, then, "That deliverance of yours is not real," I would have answered, "Let those who knew me only a week or two ago bear witness to the change it has worked in me." As the sorrow was real, so was the joy real, too! And the alteration worked in me was so great that I hope it helped to make others see its reality by my life and conduct in endeavoring to serve God.

And since then—I am still bearing my own personal testimony—what reality there has been *in all spiritual things* by way of consoling, comforting, strengthening, guiding and delivering! Religion not real? Well, some of us would willingly let everything else go as long as we may keep our faith. You may ridicule all we know, if you please, but you can never laugh us out of what we believe! If you had been in prison for six months, no one would ever convince you that imprisonment was not a real thing. And if, all of a sudden you had been set at liberty, no one would make you believe that there was no difference between liberty and captivity, and that neither of those conditions existed! And, in like manner, we believe and are sure that there is such a thing as conviction of sin and pardon for sin, for both these things are, to us, matters of fact!

Mark, yet further, that religion is, to us, no fiction, for, since our conversion, we have received certain privileges which formerly we did not possess. I will mention only one, that is*, the privilege of speaking with God in prayer,* with the assurance that He will answer us. Does God answer prayer? He who has never tried it is not able to tell, and it is most unphilosophical for any man to say that such a thing cannot be when he has never tested it himself! But they who have tried and proved it are the ones who know. I have sometimes wished that certain people could have seen some of the answers to prayer which I have received. I am sure they would have been surprised. Not long ago a woman came to see me about joining the Church. She was in great trouble, for her husband had gone away, under rather sad circumstances, to Australia, or somewhere in that part of the globe, and she could not hear any news of him. I said to her, "Well, let us pray for him." When I had prayed for his conversion, I prayed that he might come back to his wife and I said to her, "Your husband will come back to you. I am persuaded that God has heard my prayer. So, when he returns, bring him to see me in this room." As she went out, she said to the friend who had come with her, "How very positively Mr. Spurgeon speaks about the Lord answering his prayer! He says that my husband will certainly come back to me."

In a little over 12 months that woman was in my vestry *with her husband.* I had forgotten the circumstances till she recalled them to me. About the time of our prayer, God had met with him on the sea, while he

was reading one of my sermons, as a penitent sinner. He was brought to the feet of Jesus and he came back and joined this Church. And he is with us at this day in answer to that prayer. "Oh!" says someone, "that is merely a coincidence." Well, that woman did not think so, nor did her husband and nor did I at the time—and I do not think so now! You may call it a coincidence if you like, but I call it an answer to prayer, and as long as I get such coincidences, I shall be perfectly satisfied to go on praying! "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." I do not believe I should have had such coincidences if I had not asked for them and, as I get them daily, I shall stand to it, nor shall anything stop me from this glorying—that there is a God that hears prayer! And I challenge all men to try for themselves whether it is not so. If they come humbly to God, by Christ Jesus, and seek His face, they shall not seek in vain and, by-and-by, if they continue to wait upon Him in prayer, He will gird them with power so that they shall ask and receive both for themselves and for others.

I would like to mention another thing that makes us feel that the religion of Christ is no fiction, and that is, *the many cases of conversion that are constantly witnessed among us.* If this were the time and place—and I do not think that it is, for I do not care about such an exhibition of trophies of God's Grace, or bringing men out, one by one, in such a fashion—I could tell, not only of the drunk made sober, but of the man, passionate and violent in temper, becoming as meek and gentle as a child. I could fetch one out from the congregation if you wanted to see him, and I could point you to the swearer, who at one time found it impossible to speak without an oath, but who, from the moment of his conversion, was never again tried by that temptation. I could bring the thief who now knows what is his own and what is his neighbor's—and who is honest as the day. And the unchaste, who were given up as if they could never be saved, who are now our Sisters in Christ and serving Him with modest, pure, simple hearts. Show us something else that makes such changes as these, if you can! Show us something else, if you can, that will meet the needs of the hardened and abandoned people in the back slums! We do not know where to find it—but we do know that wherever Christ is faithfully preached, such conversions are continually seen—and that morality and social order and everything that is pure and lovely are sustained and promoted by the Gospel of Jesus Christ wherever it is believed! These things are *matters of fact*—let those who care to do so, resist the natural inference.

One of the strongest things which are no fiction is, *the joy of Believers when they die.* We have lately lost some of our dearest and best friends from the Tabernacle. Some of our most earnest helpers have passed away, but, oh, they have died gloriously! It has been a pleasure and a privilege to see them rejoicing while everybody else was weeping—to hear them triumphant when all around them were sorrowful—to behold them casting gleams of sunlight from their eyes even when those eyes were being glazed in death! Give me a religion by which I can live, for that is the religion on which I can die! Give me that faith which will change me into the image of Christ, for then I need not be afraid to bear the image of

death! God grant that you and I, dear Friends, may know, as a matter of personal experience, that there is a solid truth in our religion, that it is, indeed, our life!

I know that there are some people who profess to disbelieve in religion altogether, yet, every now and then, they show that they do not doubt as much as they say they do. There was a traveler, in the backwoods of America, who put up one night at a log cabin. The man who lived in the house was a very rough-looking customer and the traveler felt rather afraid of him. The traveler had some money on him and he was half-inclined to go walking on instead of stopping there. The master bade him come in and eat with him. He did so and after he had eaten, the man said, "Stranger, it is my custom to always read a chapter in the Bible, and to pray before I turn in." The traveler said that, in a moment, he felt perfectly safe! He professed to be an infidel, but he showed that his infidelity was not very deep, for he believed in the man who worshipped his God—and was not afraid to sleep under his roof. William Hone, who wrote the *Every Day Book*, was an unbeliever once. But he was traveling through Wales and he saw a little Welsh girl at the door reading her Bible. He said to her, "Ah, my Lassie, you are getting your task, I see!" "What did you say, Sir?" she asked. "I said that you are learning your task." "What do you mean, Sir? I am reading my Bible. You don't call that a *task*, do you?" Well, he did think it was a task—it would have been one to him. She said, "Why, it is this reading my Bible that makes me happy all the day long! I am trying to learn some of it by heart, but that is no task to me, it is one of my greatest pleasures."

And William Hone afterwards confessed his own faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom he had been guided by the joy that he saw in that girl's face! He could not help believing that there must be something real in religion, after all—it was life to her, and very soon it became life to him!

II. I have taken so much time for the first part of my subject that I must be very brief with the rest. My second remark about true religion is that IT IS NO TRIFLE. "It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life."

Godliness is no trifle, dear Friends, *because it concerns the soul.* If a thing only concerns the body, I do not call it a trifle—cleanliness, temperance, obedience to the laws of health—these are very proper things to be urged upon men. I wish that people in general were more careful of their bodies, but the *soul is immortal*—it will live when the body shall have molded into dust and ashes! Therefore, trifle not with your souls. If you must play the fool, let it be with your moneybags. If you must speculate, let it be with your gold. But, I pray you, venture not upon any risk with your immortal spirit—make sure work for eternity, "for what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

True religion also *concerns God* and, therefore, it is not a trifling matter. If you must trifle with someone, trifle with your equal, even with your monarch, if you will—but never trifle with your God! He that made the heavens and the earth and that holds all things in the hollow of His hand is to be worshipped and reverenced, but never to be trifled with! Beware,

you that thus insult God, for trifling with Him will bring nothing but woe to you.

True religion also *concerns Heaven and Hell*—and these are not to be trifled with. True godliness is such a thing as no saint ever dares to trifle with. He strives to enter in at the strait gate. He throws his whole energy into the running of the Christian race. No true minister ever trifles with the Truth of God he proclaims. I have preached the Gospel, now, these 30 years and more, and some of you will scarcely believe it, but in my vestry behind that door, before I come to address the congregation in this Tabernacle, I tremble like an aspen leaf. And often, in coming down to this pulpit, have I felt my knees knock together—not that I am afraid of any one of my hearers—but I am thinking of that account which I must render to God, whether I speak His Word faithfully or not. On this service may hang the eternal destinies of many. O God, grant that we may all realize that this is a matter of the most solemn concern! May we all come to God by Christ Jesus, that everything may be right with us, now, and right for eternity! God grant that it may be!

These are things which must not be trifled with, because their weight is incalculable if we do trifle with them. There will be such damage as can never be remedied. A man who once becomes a bankrupt, may start in business, again, and yet grow rich. The commander who loses a battle may gather together his troops, again, and yet lead them on to victory. But if the battle of this life is lost, woe the day! It is lost forever—there is no hope of any change to all eternity! It is not, therefore, a matter to be trifled with, but a thing to be attended to with all our might. I love to see Christians in downright earnest. The other day we lost a merchant from the City of London—a man of wealth and standing and, at the same time, a deacon of a Baptist church. Just a night or two before he died, he was at a Church meeting. He was unwell, and they could have done without him but, as he was a deacon, he felt that he ought to be there. When his pastor said to him, "My dear Sir, I think you should not be out," he answered, "If I had not been out, today, in Gresham Street, about my own business, I would not have been out, tonight, about my Master's business. If I am well enough to look after my own affairs, I am surely well enough to attend to His."

Let there always be with you, dear Christian people, this thought, that the Master's business must never be pushed behind your own, but that it must always be first and foremost with you. "It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life." The highest point, the crown, the flower, the glory of your life is your religion.

III. Now notice the next point. "It is not a vain thing." That is to say, IT IS NO FOLLY.

First, *it is no folly to serve God.* Suppose, my Brothers and Sisters, it should turn out, after all, that there is no God? Suppose that we should all die like dogs? Then there would be nobody left to laugh at me for having served my God. That is quite clear. I am of the same mind as Cicero, when he spoke about the soul being immortal, and someone said to him, "Philosophers will laugh at you for saying that." He replied, "They may laugh while I live. I am used to that kind of treatment. And if I am dead

and they also are dead, it is quite clear that no dead philosopher will be able to laugh at me." We who believe in Christ have two strings to our bow. If we live again in another world, all will be well with us. If we do not, we shall be as well off as you will be. We are as happy as you are, anyway! Actually, we feel that we are far happier—so we are quite content to go on as we are. If it is folly to serve God, I am willing to be guilty of such folly as that! As I am His creature, I would serve my Creator. And as I am His child, I would serve my Father. I think it is the chief end of my being to glorify Him here and then to enjoy Him forever in Glory!

Further, *is it folly to be reconciled to God?* Is it folly to believe that there is eternal justice and that if there is eternal justice, there will be a judgment? And if there is a judgment, there will be punishment for sin? Is that folly? And is it folly to believe that Jesus Christ came and bore the punishment for those who trust Him? And that if He bore that punishment, then those for whom He bore it may go free? And that if He bore it for those that believe in Him, then I, believing in Him, am clearly saved? Is that folly? It seems to me to be the most rational form of reasoning that I have ever come across yet, and to it will I stand! "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Next, *is it folly to be prepared to do your duty?* I venture to say that a man who is a true Christian is the most ready of any men that live to do his duty. I do not know whether it is ever a Christian's duty to kill people, but if a man is a soldier, it is amazing how often religion makes him a good soldier. Read a bit of veritable history. An officer wanted to call out some troops in India for a certain duty, and he said, "At this time of night it is no use, for all the men are drunk, unless you send for Havelock's saints—they will be all right." And so they were. Some time after, it was rumored that one of the "saints" was drunk, and Havelock straightway made enquiry and found that it was not one of his men, but another who bore the same name. The general said, "I do not know what Baptists are, but if Havelock's men are Baptists, I wish the whole army were Baptists, for there are no other soldiers like them." There was a commander who found his army better fitted for conflict because they feared the Lord and lifted up their hearts in prayer to Him. They never turned aside to drunkenness and other evil ways. God grant that you, dear Friends, may have a religion that will make you ready to do your duty, whatever it may be!

Besides, *is it not true wisdom to be prepared for your eternal destiny?* It is wise, some say, to look to present things. So it is, to a certain extent, but it is wise to look at present things in the light of the future. A man was dying—dying without hope and without much concern, either. His lawyer was called in to make his will. He was willing away all his property. His wife and his little girl stood by his bed and heard him giving his instructions. He said, "As to the home, you know, Dear, I leave that to you." So the lawyer put it down. His little girl said, "Then, Pa, you haven't got a home of your own where you are going." That sentence touched him—he had forgotten that matter—but, by God's Grace, he was led to seek and to find the eternal Home. It must be a wise thing not to only

have a home of your own, here, but to have another and a better Home to go to when you die!

A person said, one day, "I know an infidel who lately died in perfect happiness and peace." "But," asked a workman who stood by, "was he in his *senses*?" "Yes," replied the speaker, "and he died in perfect peace." "Then," said the workman, "he must have had a very miserable time while he was alive." The other asked, "What do you mean?" He answered, "I will tell you what I mean. I have a very good, kind wife—the best woman that ever lived. And I have some dear children, too, and they are my comfort and joy. And if I had to leave them, and go away, I did not know where, and did not know whether I should live, again, or not, I should feel it the most awful thing in all the world to die! And I am sure that my wife would break her heart over it. But," he said, "now I can die in perfect peace because I feel that I am going Home to my Father and to my Savior—and my wife can part with me in peace because she knows that I am going where I shall receive even greater love than she can give me. But I think that infidel must have had a scolding wife and that was why he was glad to die. I cannot understand it on any other ground."

Nor can I. It looks to me to be a most unreasonable kind of composure for a man to lie down to die and say, "I do not know where I am going. I expect I shall be annihilated." I shudder at the thought! I could not die like that! But when I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him, then I can, with reason, as well as with faith, surrender myself into my Heavenly Father's hands.

IV. Now, lastly, let me say to you, concerning true religion, that IT IS NO SPECULATION.

There are a great many speculations nowadays. If any of you want to lose your money, or are particularly anxious never to see it again, or want to have a very limited view of it, I advise you to put it into a company. It will soon disappear—depend upon that! There are many speculations and there are many people who become speculators. But there *are* some things that are certainties, and here is one. *If any man will trust himself with Jesus Christ, he shall be saved.* He may, for some time, be in darkness, but if he will fully trust himself with Christ, unless God can lie, and unless Christ can be defeated, such a man must and shall be saved! And he shall know it, too. There is not in Hell a single man who can say that he trusted Chris, and yet that Christ did not save him. And I hardly think that there is anywhere on earth a man so base as to say that. At any rate, if he did say it, I should take leave not to believe what he said.

The process of salvation is very different in different cases. About a fortnight ago, there stood in Cheapside a young man reading one of my sermons which had attracted his attention. As he was reading it, he came across this passage—"If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are saved now. But I want you to project your faith further and to believe in Jesus Christ for the whole of your life, for if you do so, you shall not only be saved, now, but you shall infallibly be saved forever." Then followed the text, "I give unto them eternal life," and this comment upon

it—"Now, eternal life cannot come to an end. 'He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.' Everlasting life cannot come to an end. It is a thing that lasts forever. Believe for everlasting life and you have it, you are saved forever."

The young man said, "Standing there, I did believe just as I was told. I trusted Christ and I believed, then, that in Him I had everlasting life. The next minute, I felt, 'Oh, what a glorious thing this is! How I love Christ who has done this great thing for me! What is there that I can do to serve Him? What sin is there that I would not give up?' Then," he said, "I said to myself, as I walked on, 'Why, I am saved! I am sure I am, because now I love Christ! Now I want to give up sin and now I want to serve Him.'" And was not that a sure proof of his being saved, because he saw the greatness of Divine Love to him and this made him grateful—and that gratitude turned him right round and made a new man of him? This is how Christ can save you, also! Suppose you have been addicted to drunkenness and that you are convinced of the evil of it. You go to Christ and He forgives you. Then you say, "Now I am forgiven, oh, how I love my Savior! I will never go back to my cups again! I have done with my old companions! I will go and seek out other people that love Christ and I will join with them if they will have me. And I will see what Christ expects me to do, and I will do it, for I will do everything for Him who has done so much for me."

That is salvation—a change of character—a deliverance from that which held you in bondage, an entrance into the blessed liberty of loving God and wanting to be holy. Oh, that we might, each one of us, know that blessedness! It is no speculation—you do not believe in Christ on a chance. If you believe in Christ, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his Word shall never pass away—you are saved, as surely as God is God! He that believes in Christ shall be saved, now, and in the hour of death, and at the day of judgment, and forever and ever.

Now, dear Friends, in closing, I should like to say that *this salvation is suitable for all whom I am addressing.* Many of you know this and you have been praying that others may know it, too. This salvation is suitable for poor men. If you are very poor, is it not time that you were rich unto God? And if you have the hard side of the hill in this world, why should you not have eternal life, and joy and bliss in the world to come? It is also equally suitable for the rich man, for if you have not where to go when you die, I pity you. To leave your parks and gardens and mansions and estates, to go from Dives' table to Dives' Hell will be a horrible thing for you, my lord, and for your ladyship, if that should happen to be your case! You need a Savior, most certainly, rich as well as poor!

This salvation exactly suits you, my aged Friend over yonder. "Oh!" you say, "I am too fixed in my habits. I am afraid I shall never be saved. I am getting quite gray and very old." Well, then, this is the very thing to make you young! "You must be born again." "Can a man be born again when he is old?" That is what Nicodemus asked and Christ told him that he could be. He can put new life into you, so that you shall be a child even if you are a 100 years old! And you shall joy and rejoice in God that, in your latter days, you have come to Him as a child and received a Fa-

ther's love. "Ah! but it won't suit *me*," says a young man. "I need to see a little life." That is exactly what I want you to see—but you will never see life till you see Christ! "Oh, but I want to be happy!" I know you do, and so do I! And I should like you to be happy. "I never believe in cats being cats before they are kittens. I like to see young people full of joy and full of merriment." I agree with you, but I tell you that there is more joy experienced by a Christian in five minutes than by a worldling in 500 years. When a saint lives near to God—

"His joys divinely grow,
Unspeakable like those above,
And Heaven begins below."

Talk of life and happiness—we have it who sought the Savior in our youth—and have never turned aside from Him since!

This salvation suits everybody. It suits you even if you are a most moral person. You are like a statue of marble, now, very beautiful and fair to look upon, but you have no warm life of love to God within you! Oh, if we could only make that marble live!—

"Oh, that those lips had language!"

But the Grace of God can put life into your dead morality!

Perhaps I am speaking to some who are immoral. If that is your case, this salvation is just the thing for you! The religion of Jesus suits publicans and harlots—it is just the thing for the felon and the depraved. Someone here, perhaps, is half-ashamed to be in this congregation. You are the very one I am sent after tonight—the lost sheep! It is you the Shepherd is seeking! He can afford to leave the 99 that went not astray. But you lost sheep—you lost woman, lost man—you are the very one that Jesus loves, for, "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Come and cast yourself into His arms by simple trust, for that is faith! Trust Jesus! Just as I lean my whole weight upon this rail, lean on Him your whole weight! Fall flat down on His promise of pardon! Lie right down on the Rock—trust in nothing of your own—but trust Christ for everything—and you are saved!

God grant that this may be the happy lot of us all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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ZION'S PROSPERITY
NO. 2576

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 26, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1856.

"You shall arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, is come. For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof."
Psalm 102:13, 14.

A selfish man in trouble is exceedingly hard to comfort because the source of his joy lies entirely within himself and when he is sad, all his springs are dry. But a large-hearted man, a man of benevolence and Christian philanthropy, has other springs from which to supply himself with comfort beside those which are found within himself. He can go to his God, first of all, and there seek abundant help. And we who try to comfort him can use other arguments not relating to himself, but to the world at large, to his country and, above all, to the Church of Christ. The writer of this Psalm seems to have been exceedingly sorrowful. He says, "I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top." And, finding there was no solace in his own circumstances, the only way in which he could comfort himself was to believe that God would arise and have mercy upon Zion. Though he was sad, yet Zion should prosper. However low was his own estate, yet Zion should arise. Christian you can always comfort yourself in God's gracious dealings toward the church at large, but, if the church of which you are a member is in a sad and sickly condition, where shall you comfort yourself? Surely, then, you will be compelled to say with the Psalmist, "I have eaten ashes like bread and mingled my drink with weeping because of Your indignation and Your wrath, for You have lifted me up, and cast me down."

We shall notice four things. The *nature, necessity, means* and *signs of church prosperity*.

I. THE NATURE OF THE PROSPERITY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. Here I shall differ from many, for I think that many churches that are called prosperous are far from being so, while some churches, which are despised, are the most prosperous in God's estimation.

We do not conceive it to be, necessarily, a sign of a church's prosperity *when the congregation is large*. We love to see people throng to hear God's Word and to hear assembled multitudes shout aloud the praises of Jehovah. But when we witness these things, we do not take it for granted that the church is prosperous. Concerning some places, we would pray God to empty every seat, for there is in them a going away to Rome, or a wan-

dering from the fundamental principles of God's Word. The building may be full—crammed to its very doors—but there may be a desolating blight inside. There may be more prosperity in a place where but six of Christ's true people meet together than where thousands congregate to worship God in a way which they think to be right, but which is not in accordance with His sacred Word.

Nor do we conceive that *the riches of the people* make a church prosperous. Ask some member of a certain aristocratic community, "Is your church prospering?" "Yes," he says, "there were 19 carriages waiting outside the other Sunday." Ask another the same question and he will say, "Yes, So-and-So, who is worth so many thousands, has joined the church." We say that a rich man's soul is as precious as a poor man's, but, at the same time, could anyone bring to us all the gold mines of Peru, the church would not, thereby, prosper! There are many churches which are rich in wealth, but exceedingly poor in faith, which might well barter all of their riches for the humble piety of the Methodist, or the earnest zeal of the ancient Puritan.

Nor do we think that a church is necessarily prosperous *because the minister is exceedingly eloquent*. The tendency of the present day is toward what is called "intellectual preaching." I never could see any intellect in it. I have heard literary men preach and I could only say of them what Locke said, "If a man cannot make you understand what he means, very likely it is because there is no meaning in it." If you cannot understand him at once, just leave him alone, for he probably does not understand himself. We hold it to be a wrong thing that intellectual Rationalism should disgrace our churches—God's pulpit was meant for God's Gospel! We have theaters and public halls in which men may teach philosophy if they wish to do so. Take Christianity out of our pulpits and what have we done? The pulpit is the main bastion of the Church of Christ—the Thermopylae of Christendom. Here the great Truths of the Bible must be taught and he that uses not his pulpit to preach the Gospel has disgraced it, even though his talents are almost superhuman! He has disgraced God's Church in not unceasingly proclaiming the Evangelical principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Then, my Friends, you may ask me how I can tell whether the Church is prospering? I answer—I must consider for what purposes the Church was formed. And if it is not accomplishing that particular objective, it is not prospering. The Church is established for two objectives. First, for bringing God's wandering sheep back to the fold of Christ. And, secondly, for fostering those sheep that are brought within the fold.

We enter a place where we hear Divine Truth proclaimed. We enquire, "How many have been added to the church this year?" "No addition, no progress." We enquire again another year—the same reply is received, "No sinners saved, none brought into the fold." We are very deferential towards all ministers of the Everlasting Gospel—we would sooner receive a bad one as our friend than reject a good one. But we will not flatter our Brother, we will not mind about his congregation—if he does not win souls to Christ, his church is not prospering! If the pool of Baptism has never been opened to receive a convert, if the church doors have never

turned upon their hinges to receive souls seeking salvation, if no fresh members are received to sit down at the Table of the Lord, if God's elect have not been brought in, we have strong suspicions whether that man is a minister of God—we are certain that he is not a successful one! That church is in a sad, sad condition, which never hears the cry of newborn souls in its midst. God forbid we should preach for even a month or a week without winning souls! We think it would be worse than death to live a year and not hear of hundreds brought to Christ. It is true prosperity when the Lord's children are gathered out from among the ungodly, when God is pleased, by the agency of His Word, to break hard hearts, to bend stubborn wills and to bring the mourners in Zion to rejoice in the love of the Savior. Is *your* church thus increasing? Then it is truly prospering.

We also said there is another reason for the establishment of the Church of Christ, that is, for its own edification. It is a happy church in which the sheep of Christ are fed. Beloved, if God's people are not fed, we do not think the church is prospering. Some have laughed at the term, "fed." We have heard people say, "What do they mean by being fed?" Ah, children know the meaning of that word, and our hearers know what is meant by it. They do not care about our garnishing for the platter on which we serve the food, or the manner in which we carve it—we may cut it with a blunt knife, yet the child of God loves it! But if there is no food for the saints, if the members do not grow in Grace, if they are not irreproachable in their conduct, if they have not the spirit of Christ, if they do not enjoy fellowship with Jesus, if they have not attained to the knowledge of the love of God in Christ, if they have not entered into the rest of faith, if they do not live near Jesus and endeavor as much as in them lies to imitate Him—we say the church is not prospering! It may be the wealthiest under Heaven, but it may also be the most impoverished. It may be the most learned, according to human views, but the most heretical, the farthest from prosperity and the nearest to blasphemy!

Let us look at our churches as they ought to be viewed. Are souls saved? Are saints edified and built up? This is the only thing I ask myself. Some say this, some that, and some the other about our church—we care not in the least about the ten thousand opinions people form of us! We only say sinners are saved and we will keep on preaching as long as this is the case. And if we can find men, women and children declaring that they are spiritually fed, we feel that our mission is successful! Is it so in *your* church? Then you have the elements of a prosperous one.

II. We shall now consider THE NECESSITY FOR THE PROSPERITY OF OUR CHURCHES.

What matters that to some? They come regularly to chapel and occupy their pews. But they never ask themselves the question, "Does our church prosper?" Oh, no—that is the minister's business! The Deacons must look after that matter. Our friend comes to chapel Sunday after Sunday, like a very religious man. He does not go to sleep, that I have upon good evidence! Sometimes the sermon should stir him up, yet it does not. He approves of the idea of everybody minding his own business and, while carrying out the old maxim, "Charity begins at home," he al-

lows it to end there. Now and then, he prays for the minister, if called upon at the Prayer Meeting, but he does not regard the minister as his Brother, so he does not pray for him at the family altar. He hears that missions are succeeding abroad, but, for all he cares, the mission stations might be closed. He would like the church to prosper, but he would not put himself out of his way even to secure that result and, as to giving up himself, like Curtius of old, and leaping into the gulf to serve the church—oh, no—he would never commit so rash an act! He would not endanger his own life, lest the church should be damaged by losing so good a man!

But I trust that some of you have a regard for the church's prosperity. If not, you ought to have. Let me remind you why. Even selfish as we may be, we ought to care for the success of the church, first, *for our own sakes.* If we do not, by Divine Grace, live and labor for our fellow-creatures, their decline will have a deleterious influence upon our own piety. The coldness of the church of which I am a member tends to chill me. The lukewarmness of my fellow Christians has a tendency to pull me down. But if I belong to a church which is rich in Grace, the tendency will be to fill my mouth with marrow and fatness—and to make me rejoice in the ways of the Lord!

Your families, too, are deeply interested in the prosperity of the church. I know that many sons and daughters do not attend the chapels where their parents go—their parents do not ask them to do so—they would not like them to go there. "It does very well for us," they say, "but it would not suit them." Then, there must be something amiss there! What is good for the parent is good for the child, and what is good for the child is good for the parent. I like what Robert Hall once said when he had been preaching a doctrine which he was told was suitable for old women—"If it is so," he replied, "then it is suitable for everybody, and I shall preach that doctrine again." Now, if you love your families and would see them brought into Christ's Church, you must labor with God in prayer for them and ask that He would be pleased to have mercy upon Zion, that her set time may come, that her servants may take pleasure in her stones and favor the dust thereof.

Also, *for the sake of the neighborhood in which you live,* labor for God, seeking His blessing, that your church may prosper. Wherever a minister's voice is raised in the cause of his Master, all around there ought to be a green spot, as in the desert, where water is to be found, there is an oasis where the traveler can rest, so, where a House for God is built, there ought to be a green spot where the efforts of the tract-distributor and the Sunday school teacher should tend to keep the soil fertile.

Again, for *the sake of our nation,* seek the prosperity of Zion. If we are to be a prosperous nation, we shall not accomplish that result by our commerce, or by the force of arms, but by our Christianity! As long as ever Christ's Church remains faithful in this land, old England shall stand in the front of the nations. England has been the cradle of the Gospel and, therefore, has she flourished. And, rest assured that as the true faith grows strong, England shall be mighty. The flag of old England is nailed to the mast, not by our sailors, but by our God! England is safe as

long as she keeps fast by the true Protestant principles of the Everlasting Gospel. Her ministers need never fear for her, for firm as the eternal hills, strong as the mighty mountains shall this, our happy land, forever rest while she is true to Christ! God grant that the Church may prosper for old England's sake!

But, most of all, we want to see the Church prosper *for Christ's sake*. He is everything to us! Compared with Christ, our nationality is less than nothing and vanity. But, oh, when we think of all our Savior did and suffered for us here below, surely we can desire nothing less than for Him to see of the travail of His soul and to be abundantly satisfied. When you bend your knees in prayer to God to bless His Church, think that you hear Christ groaning in Gethsemane, that you see Him in agony in the garden. Think of Him when the thorns were placed on His head. Think of the shame, the spitting, the plucking off the hair that He endured. Yes, when you pray for the Church, think, then, that you behold the Lamb of God expiring on the Cross. Think that you hear Him cry, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani"—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" When you think of these things, surely you will say, "Did Jesus suffer thus to win a crown, and shall I not pray that that crown may rest on His head? Did Jesus thus die that His children might be ransomed and His elect saved, and shall I not pray that He may realize that desire?"

For your Master's sake—for your Lord's sake—for His blood and agonies' sake, I beseech you, pray always for Zion, "pray for the peace of Jerusalem." "They shall prosper that love her."

III. We notice, next, THE ONLY MEANS OF REVIVAL IN GOD'S CHURCH.

What is it? We may hear of some great evangelist going through the land—surely *he* will revive the churches! We will hold a convocation of the clergy and *they* shall devise means of reviving the churches! Not so, thinks the Psalmist—he says, "You shall arise," as if God had nothing to do but to arise and then His Church would arise, too! For, when God arises, Zion begins to prosper! How easy are the methods by which God accomplishes His great works! No doubt, if we had had to devise means for lighting up this earth, when the darkness of the evening first came upon it, we would have recommended some fifty thousand great lights hung about in various parts of the world. But look at God's wondrous means of lighting the globe—the sun rises, the light shines and all is done! So is it with God's plan of reviving His Church. We devise this plan and the other, but God only arises and has mercy upon Zion—and "the time to favor her, yes, the set time is come."

Let us learn this lesson—if our church is to be made to prosper, God must do it! If we are to grow up in Christ and see great revival in these latter days, God must do it! Can the minister revive the Church? Can the people revive it? Certainly not! God alone can accomplish that great work. He must arise and have mercy upon Zion. There are means which He puts into the hands of His people and wishes them to use, but still, the ultimate reason of a church's growth is that God arises and has mercy upon her! If the prosperity of a church consists in the salvation of sinners, must not God arise to save? If the building up of God's elect is

another part of spiritual prosperity, must not God arise to build up His people in their faith, for, "except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it"? You may bring me a man filled with the Holy Spirit, possessing the zeal of Peter, or the eloquence of Paul, but no prosperity will there be in God's Church unless God Himself bestows the heavenly shower and sends salvation down! What our churches need, just now, is not simply men of God, but we need more of God's own Presence and Power in our midst!

We think we have our God among us, but I fear we have not so much of His Presence as our forefathers used to have. I am inclined to look back with holy envy upon the olden times—the days of George Whitefield, or of Rowland Hi1l—there was then a larger influx into the Church than there is now and a more visible manifestation of God's Holy Spirit. We are multiplying our places of worship and doing very much towards evangelizing the world, but we have not the shout of a King in our midst as we used to have! We have our soldiers clad in steel—their arms bright and glittering, their swords of the best metal—but the great lack is we have not the King's Presence as we once had. I am sure, having passed through many churches, there is a sad lack of the influences of the Holy Spirit. There is a lack of vital godliness and earnest piety. There is some supplication, but not that prevailing prayer which thunders in the ears of God and brings copious blessings from on high. Where are the Elijahs who can stop up the bottles of Heaven? Where are there on the earth those who can face a multitude and prophesy to the dry bones, knowing that when they speak, souls shall be saved?

Go into many Prayer Meetings in London—I hope it is not so generally throughout the country—the minister is obliged to say that he has not enough people present to ring the changes and he, himself, has to pray twice to fill up the time. By all his preaching he cannot get the people to pray! Shame upon such a church! This state of things proves that God is not in our midst as He was formerly. When God shall arise, His Church shall arise in earnest, fervent prayer, for the time to favor Zion, yes, the set time will then have come!

IV. Now, Beloved, let us consider the fourth point—THE SIGNS THAT GOD'S CHURCH IS BEING BLESSED. "For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof."

What are the "stones" of Zion? The Church of God is built of living stones—that is, *the children of God.* And it is a good sign when God's servants take pleasure in one another and "favor the dust"—that is, not the ministers, nor the deacons, but *the poor members.* In these degenerate times, we do not take so much pleasure in each other as we ought. There is little Christian sociability, but it is a happy sign when the members meet in a cordial spirit and begin to talk of what the Savior did and suffered here below, and of Jesus' charming name which has a sweeter sound than the most melodious music! It is profitable, indeed, when Christians begin to speak often, one to another, and God Himself turns eaves-dropper to His children. He listens and hears, and a Book of Remembrance is written—the Lord, Himself, becomes a reporter and records the conversation of them that fear Him and that think upon His

name! We shall be sure the church is prospering when all the members love each other and the poorer ones are not overlooked!

There are some chapels where a Christian Brother and Sister are divided by that rail in the center—they have sat there for years—yet they do not know each other's names! They did show each other the hymn one day, when one came late, but they have never shaken hands. They are members of the same church and one of them may be poor and starving—but the other knows nothing about it because he does not, "favor the dust thereof." But, when God arises, and has mercy upon Zion, His people say—

"Have You a lamb in all Your flock
I would refuse to feed?
Have You a foe, before whose face
I fear Your cause to plead?"

It is a good sign for a church when its members "take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof."

The next translation we will give of this word, "stones," is the *Doctrines of the Bible.* By the term, "Doctrines," I do not mean merely some three or four particular points, but *all* the Doctrines which build up the Church of Christ. In these days it is usual to hear people say, "Doctrines are of no importance. You may believe this or that, but you will go to Heaven all the same." It is not so, Beloved! God has given us a Bible, common sense and judgment—and if we foolishly say, "It does not matter what we believe," we thereby sin against God! It is important that we should be right in Doctrine, though not so important as that we should be right in heart. The tendency of this age is toward what is called, "charity." I hold that charity is not for us to give up our convictions, but for each of us to preach them boldly! The charity of this age wants us to get rid of our angles and points. It says, "Do not say anything to offend such-and-such an individual." Nonsense! True charity is for me to boldly speak my views and for my Brother of an opposite opinion to do the same—and for me to love him, if he holds the Head, Christ Jesus—but it is no charity to put a gag on us all. There is a great evil in the universal charity of the present day—it is Satan transforming himself into an angel of light! He sees us divided into different camps and he says, "*Put down your flags! No sectarianism*!" He means, "*No religion.*" But let us all keep to our own regiments and fight manfully for them, yet combining against the common enemy. Let us hold God's Truth, but not with a slippery hand. If a Doctrine is true, let us grip it fast, though the earth shake or the heavens fall!

Christian, where there is a love for God's Truth, God will bless His Church. But because this is a time-serving age, because we have not come out plainly with those things which distinguish us from each other, because we have paid too much deference to each other's views and have not boldly declared the great Truths of His Word—these are the reasons why God has, to some extent, deserted us.

You say, "I do not see so much in Doctrines, after all." Then you will not see much prosperity! I love so much what I believe to be true that I would fight for every grain of it! Not for the "stones" only, but for the very "dust thereof." I hold that we ought not to say that any Truth of God is

non-essential—it may be non-essential to salvation, but it is essential for something else! Why, you might as well take one of the jewels out of the Queen's crown and say it is nonessential, she will be Queen all the same! Will anyone dare to tell God that any Doctrine is non-essential? O gracious Spirit, have You written what is non-essential? Have You given me a Book respecting which I say, "My father and mother believed it all, but it is not necessary for me to believe it"? God has given me a judgment—am I to follow in the wake of other people, thinking I shall be sure to be right and that God will never ask me what I was? An easy kind of religion this! It was not so in the days of good old John Bunyan and Berridge—they sang a far different song! But now people are saying, "I can listen to So-and-So and So-and-So"—men who contradict one another! We cannot think much of people who can hear opposite opinions and yet believe both to be correct! We cannot expect much growth unless you hold the Truth of God and take pleasure in the stones of Zion and, "favor the dust thereof"—every atom of it!

Once again, the stones of Christ's Church are *the ordinances* and God's people ought to take care that they love her "stones," and favor her "dust." For those two Divine Institutions—Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the observance of them as handed down to us from Apostolic times—there ought to be an intense love in the hearts of God's people, that we may be kept from the innovations of men. Let us always love what God has given us! It may be thought by some to be antiquated, yet let us never let it go, for then will God build up the ruined walls of Zion.

I may also mention that it is a good sign of the church's prosperity when *the ministry of the Word and the Prayer Meeting* are well attended—especially the latter. A friend of mine said, the other evening, "I shall go to the lecture to-night, but I did not go on Monday, for it was only a Prayer Meeting." Why, that is the best service in the week! What is to become of your minister, in the other services, if you do not meet to pray for him? Yet many professing Christians never think of meeting for prayer—they leave that duty to the old members—those who always speak about "the unthinking horse rushing into the battle." A Prayer Meeting ought to be regarded as superior to any other service and there should be at least all the members met together to pray. If you say, "It is only a Prayer Meeting," even that is the "dust" of Zion, and God's people "take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof"—the little services as well as the great services. "You shall arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, is come. For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof."

And now, dear Friends, you may not agree with me as to my ideas of a church's prosperity, but there must be one thing you have observed as the great need of the churches in the present day. That is the need of more prayer, more firm attachment to the walls of Zion and greater love to the Doctrines of the Bible. And I beseech you, be henceforth doubly in earnest in seeking for God's Spirit to enable you to cling, heart and soul, to every "stone" and every grain of "dust" in God's Temple of Truth, and let nothing be given up to please men—cleave fast to all that God has ordained and He will prosper and bless you!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EZEKIEL 34:11-31.

The former part of the chapter contains a prophetic denunciation against the evil shepherds—the men who fed not the flocks, but fed themselves—who fouled, with their filthy feet, the waters where the flocks drank, and trod upon the soft grass that otherwise might have afforded pasture for the sheep. After pronouncing judgment upon them, the Lord turns His thoughts to His sheep and gives this precious promise—

Verse 11. *For thus says the Lord God, Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep and seek them out.* The shepherds did not do this. They left the sheep to wander and many were lost on the mountains. But where men fail, God proves Himself all-sufficient. My Hearer, are you sitting under an unprofitable ministry? Then look to the Chief Shepherd and not to the man who is unfaithful as an under-shepherd!

12. *As a shepherd seeks for his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.* It does not matter where the place is, the Lord will find His sheep. If it is the castle of Giant Despair, He will find them. If it is the worst dungeon in Doubting Castle, He will discover them there! They may have wandered upon the mountains of Despondency and Dejection. They may have been lost in the gorges of some dark Valley of Desperation, but the Lord says, "I will both search My sheep and seek them out." And, mind you, He does not seek without finding! He discovers them, for He knows where they are. Oh, is not that a "cloudy and dark day" wherein we wander from God and know not how to return to Him? But clouds and darkness are banished when we see the light of His face!

13-15. *And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord GOD.* There is a blessed state of rest! God's flock are not only to be fed, but they are to lie down while they feed! You have sometimes noticed a flock, at noontide, when the sun is hot, lie down upon the grass and feed while they rest. That is what God's people are to do. They are to lie down in tranquility of spirit. They are to lie down in a state of placid submission to His will, in a state of perfect security—a state, not of idleness from the Master's service, but still a state in which they know there is nothing for them to do for their own security since Christ has accomplished the whole of their salvation! "I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord God." It is not everyone of God's people that has attained to this blessed experience, to be able to lie down in quiet confidence and rest—

"Thousands in the fold of Jesus,
This attainment never can boast.
To His name eternal praises,

None of these shall ever be lost."

Deeply engraved on His heart their names remain. If you are His sheep, yet even if you have never come to lie down in peace, if you cannot say, "I know and am confident," and cannot rest while you feed, it is still comforting for you to feel that all Christ's sheep are His sheep, whether they are lying down or standing up, or even wandering from Him!

16. *I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away.* Ah, one little thinks, perhaps, that there should be such a thing as a poor sheep driven away, but it is sometimes true! A legal preacher drives Christ's sheep away from Christ. A seeking soul would gladly come to Jesus, but he is told that he must *be* something and *do* something before he can come. The poor sinner would trust in Jesus, but he is told, first, to get such-and-such a state of heart. He is told, "You are not the man who should be encouraged to come to Christ—you must have some deeper *experience* before you come." But, blessed be God, the Good Shepherd says, if Satan has driven you away, or a legal preacher has driven you away, "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away."

16. *And will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.* Those who boast of being fat and strong, who glory in themselves—these, God will destroy! But the poor, weak, sick souls shall be fed with kindness tempered with judgment.

17, 18. *And as for you, O My flock, thus says the Lord GOD; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. Seems it a small thing to you to have eaten up the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? And to have drunk of the deep waters, but you must foul the residue with your feet?* Oh, how many there are, even of God's sheep, that foul the waters! They come up to God's House, where, perhaps, they get some sweet morsel in the sermon, but there are some things in it with which they do not quite agree. They are walking home with some young Christian and he is thinking how blessedly he felt under the sermon, while, perhaps, that old professor is grumbling the whole time and stirring up the waters with his feet! If the pasture is not good enough for you, you should let the lambs eat of it without treading it down! Others like it, though you may not, and if you do not like it, you can always leave it! But what is the use of finding fault with it and treading it under your feet and not letting others eat of it? It is a great crime, says God—"Seems it a small thing" to tread it down under your feet, to spoil the spiritual enjoyment of your Brothers and Sisters? It seems, to some, of very little consequence what harm they do to God's weak ones—but it is not so—it is a great sin to tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures, so you quibblers and critics had better beware!

19-21. *And as for My flock, they eat that which you have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which you have fouled with your feet. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD unto them; Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because you have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns,*

till you have scattered them abroad. I wish some people would not thrust so much with side and shoulder in their controversies with their brethren. It may be all very well for a man to be honest and faithful, and push with his horns, but there are some diseased ones who cannot stand rough usage when they are only coming in all simplicity to drink at the Fountain of Life.

22, 23. *Therefore will I save My flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them.* There is only one Shepherd. As for the rest of us, we are only under-shepherds. There is only one Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ—we are simply the men He employs to look after His sheep a little. He is the Great Shepherd and when He shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in Glory. "I will set up one shepherd over them."

23-25. *And he shall feed them, even My servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a Covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.* Those who have seen the watching of flocks by night in the East could give you quite a picture of the meaning of this verse. Sometimes the shepherds will sit down in the midst of bushes and briars that may grow at the side of the woods and, taking some of them for firewood, they will light a fire in the night. And when the wolves come around them, the sheep are quite safe. I have read of this in books of travel—and what a beautiful thing it seems to sit, with the full moon shining down on the forest, and the fires alight, feeling that, notwithstanding all the wolves, the sheep are quite safe with the shepherds there to protect them! So is it with God's people. They must always expect, while they are in the woods of this world, to have a scratch, now and then, from the briars and thorns, but, "they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods." God will always take care of His own, for, "the Lord knows them that are His."

26. *And I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.* My earnest prayer is that this church may be a great blessing to all who are around us—and I firmly believe it will be so, by God's Grace!

27. *And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.* The Jews will know that God is the Lord when they shall return to their own land. The poor tired sinner, best of all knows that God is God when he gets the bands of his neck broken off him! By nature, we all have bands about our necks—it is only God who takes them off. Pilgrim, you know, lost his burden when he looked at the Cross—it rolled away down into the sepulcher. And if you had asked him then, "Is God, God?" "Yes," he would have said, "otherwise, I should not have had the bands of my neck loosed." No man who has had the bands taken off him will ever doubt

that there is a God! Let him experience that holy calm which springs from the fact of his having been set at Gospel liberty and he will say, "This is the work of God! No man, no human power could have done it." I can never be an Arminian as long as I feel myself a sinner. I am obliged to come back to this—Lord, I must be saved by Sovereign Grace, or not at all. A single day's experience is enough to take all the self-conceit out of a Christian if the Lord should leave him to his own unaided strength. We best know that God is God when we have had the bands broken off our necks. How many are there sitting here with bands on their necks—slaves, wearing the yoke upon their shoulders? They cannot see it, but it is there, nevertheless. Who is there who can say, "My bands are broken from my neck"?—

"'My sins are drowned, as in a flood,
Of Jesus' pure and matchless blood.'

I am finally discharged; the bands are broken off my neck, verily, God is God."

28, 29. *And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will raise up for them a garden of renown.* Jesus is "a garden of renown," because you may go to Him at all times and you will always find fruit on Him. That is more than you can say of any other garden. You may go to Him and you will always find the sort of fruit you need. Is He not "a garden of renown"? You will find healing virtue in His leaves and satisfying fruits hanging in clusters upon Him. He is "a garden of renown" because His Father planted Him, because He has food enough for all His saints and a gracious variety for all their tastes! And He will blossom through eternity! Because of the multitude who sit under His shadow and rejoice therein, He is "a garden of renown" to His people, for under His shadow they are begotten and brought forth! The greatest transactions of their lives have taken place beneath the shadow of that old tree, "the garden of renown."

29, 30. *And they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more. Thus shall they know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are My people, says the Lord God.* Thus shall they know it. Do *you* know it? Has God told it to you? Have you the witness of the Spirit within your spirit that you are born of God? My Hearers, never be satisfied till you get this, for you will never be truly at rest until you know that you are God's people and until you can, each one, say, "My God, my *God,* you are *my God*."

31. *And you My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men, and I am your God, says the Lord GOD.* "However much I may have lifted you up, you are only men, after all. But I am not a man, I am your God," says the Lord. And we rest more upon what God is, than upon what man is, for He, "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask, or think."

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

LIVING ON THE WORD
NO. 2577

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 3, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 15, 1883.

"Man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live."
Deuteronomy 8:3.

THE main thing for every one of us is life. What would it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own life? Of what use would riches be if life were gone? What is the value of broad acres to a dead man, or the applause of nations to one who lies in his sepulcher? The first thing, therefore, that a man is to look to, is life. There are some persons who take this Truth of God in a wrong sense and so make mischief of it. They say, "We must live," whereas, in the sense in which they mean it, there is no such necessity at all! That we must continue to live here is not at all clear—it were better far for us to die than to live by sinning. Martyrs have preferred to suffer most fearful deaths rather than, even by a word, to bring disgrace upon the name of Christ. And every true Christian would prefer immediate death rather than dishonor his great Lord. and Master.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, according to our common notion, if we must live, we must eat. We must eat bread which is the staff of life and, sometimes, when bread is scarce and hunger sets up its sharp pangs, men have been driven to put forth their hand unto iniquity to provide themselves with necessary food. You remember how our Divine Lord, who is our perfect Exemplar in all things, acted when He was in this situation? When He had fasted in the wilderness 40 days and 40 nights, He hungered and then the Evil One came to Him and said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones be turned into bread." This was, in effect, saying, "Leave off trusting in Your Heavenly Father. He has evidently deserted You—He has left You in the wilderness among the wild beasts and though He feeds *them*, He has not fed You! He has left You to starve—therefore, help Yourself—exercise Your own power! Though You have put it under God's keeping and, being here on earth, You have become Your Father's Servant, yet steal a little of Your service from Your Father and use it on Your own behalf. Take some of that power which You have devoted to His great work and employ it for Your own comfort. Leave off trusting in Your Father—command these stones to be made

bread." At once this text flashed forth, as the Master drew it out, like a sword from its scabbard—"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." It was only by the use of this "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," that the arch-enemy was driven off from Christ! And I want to use that weapon now. I may say of it what David said of the sword of Goliath, "There is none like that; give it me." That sword, with which Christ won the victory, is the best one for His servants to employ!

This answer of our Lord to the tempter teaches us that the sustenance of our life, although naturally and according to the ordinary appearance of things depends upon bread, yet really depends upon God! It is God who gives the bread the power to nourish the man. To me, it seems a great mystery that bread, or any other kind of food, should do this. I can understand how, being matter in a certain form, it tends to build up the material structure of the body, albeit that the process is a very amazing one by which bread turns into flesh, blood, bone, muscle, hair and all sorts of things, by a perpetual working of the Power of God. But it is more remarkable, still, that this material should seem, at any rate, to some extent, to nourish man's *heart*, so that the very soul and the living principle within him should be dependent upon its being sustained by the food of the body! Can any of us tell how it is that the inner spirit sets in motion the muscles of the hand and the nerves that communicate with the brain? How is it that the impalpable spirit—a thing which you cannot see or hear, which is not, itself, at all material—yet possesses powers by which it controls the materialism of this outward body? And how is it that the material substance in bread somehow works to the keeping of our spirit in connection with this flesh and blood? I cannot explain this mystery, but I believe it to be a continual miracle worked by God. I am frequently told that miracles have ceased. It seems to me that miracles are the rule of God's working and that, everywhere, things of marvel and of wonder are to be perceived if we will only look below the outward appearance! Dig for a while beneath the mere surface and we shall see—

"A world of wonders: I can say no less."

According to our text, we are called upon to observe that the power which keeps us alive is not in the bread, itself, but in God, who chooses to make use of the bread as His agent in nourishing our frame. I do not infer from this Truth of God that, therefore, I ought never to eat, but to live by faith because God can make me live without bread. Some people seem to me to be very unwise when they infer that because Goal can heal me, therefore I am never to take fit and proper medicine for a disease because I am to trust in God. I do trust in God, but I trust in God in God's own way—and His way of procedure is this—if I wish to satisfy hunger, I must ordinarily eat bread. If I wish to be cured of any malady, I must take the remedy He has provided. That is His general rule of working, but still, it would be an equally grievous error and would show another form of folly if we were to say that it is the bread or the medicine that does the

work! It is the bread that feeds, it is the medicine that heals—but it is God who works by these means, or, if He pleases—who works without them! If it were necessary that His child should live and He did not choose to put ravens into commission to bring him bread and meat, or if He did not command a widow to sustain His servant, yet He could support him without any means, for, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." When the Lord speaks and bids him live, he lives! God spoke the world into existence—His Word still keeps the whole fabric of the universe upon its pillars and, surely, that Word is able to sustain our soul in life even without the use of outward means, or by means as long as God pleases.

That, I think, is the meaning of the text. God took His people into the wilderness where there was no sowing, no reaping, no making bread—and they seemed as if they must be famished there. But, then, God made the manna drop from Heaven, to show that if not by one means, yet by another, He could sustain them. He took them where there were no rippling brooks or gentle purling streams of water, but His servant struck the flinty rock and the water came forth to show that God could give men drink, not only from the fountains of the deep, below, or by rain from the clouds above, but from the solid rocks if He so pleased! God can give you bread to eat, my Friend. Though not perhaps in the way you hope, it may come in a fashion of which you have never even dreamed! I have read of one who was condemned to be starved to death and, as the judge pronounced the sentence, he said to him, "And what can your God do for you, now?" The man replied, "My God can do this for me—if He pleases, He can feed me from your table." And so it happened, though the judge never knew it, for his own wife sent food to the poor man and kept him alive until, at last, he regained his liberty! God has a way of using most unlikely instruments to effect His purpose. He can, if He pleases, make the waters stand upright as a heap until the chosen nation has passed through the midst of the sea. Or He can permit the fire to blaze around His people and yet keep them from being burned, as Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego came forth unharmed from Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace—and not even the smell of fire had passed upon them!

I now come to the more spiritual meaning of the text and I pray God to make it to be rich food for your souls. I ask you to notice, first, *the Word.* "Every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord." Secondly, consider *the use we are to make of the Word.* We are to live upon it! And then, thirdly, note *the adaptation of that Word to our use*—every word of it, for, according to the text, we do not live upon some words that come out of God's mouth, "but by *every* word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live."

I. First, then, let us think a little about THE WORD OF THE LORD.

What do we mean by the expression, "the Word of God"? God deigns to use figures of speech such as we can understand, for we are like little children who have to learn by pictures. Now, with regard to a man, his word is often the expression of his wish. He desires such-and-such a

thing to be done and he says to his servant, "Do this," or to another, "Come here," or, "Go there." His word is the expression of his wish. Alas, with us, our wishes are often strong and our words are feeble! We order such-and-such a thing to be done, but it is not done. We have, perhaps, a thousand wishes in our hearts which, if we were to utter them, would be to make ourselves appear ridiculous! We may wish to do this and that, but if we were to say, "Let these things be done," they would not be done in spite of all our saying, for, often, where the word of a man is, there is weakness. It is only where the Word of God is that there is power! Speaking after the manner of men, when God wills a thing, He says, "Let it be," and it is immediately! Power goes forth from God with His will. He said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God said, "Let the waters under the Heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear. And it was so." God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth: and it was so." He has but to will anything and it comes to pass! His Word is His will in motion, His power put into action—that is the common and emphatic sense of the term.

God's Word is also *the expression of His Truth.* A man says to us, "I promise you so-and-so," and we say to him, "We rely upon your word." A man's honor is involved in his word. He who does not keep his word is not a man of honor and he soon falls, very naturally and very properly, into disgrace with his fellows. Men will not trust one whose word is not reliable. Alas, the words of men are not only feeble, but they are often fickle and false! But the Word of God is the promise of One who knows what He is saying, who is able to perform what He promises and who will never change nor ever be untrue. So that, if we look at His Word as being the expression of His Truth, we see His faithfulness. And upon these two—the power that can keep the promise, and the will which is faithful to keep it—we may rest with joy and confidence.

Again, if a man is a true man, his word is a *revelation of himself.* One of the ancients said of a very beautiful boy or young man, when he had looked at him, "Speak, boy, for then I can see you." And we often see a great deal more of a person's character when he speaks than when we simply look at him. There is many a pretty face that has been admired because of its appearance, but when its owner's not very pretty tongue has begun to chatter, love has been almost driven to its wits' end to find any cause for admiration! There are some people who talk in such a way that when we see their inner selves, they appear as unlovely as their outer selves seem to be comely. But a true man reveals himself by his words. Hence it is that the Lord Jesus Christ is called, "The Word of God." Jesus Christ is God speaking. God thinks what He says, and the thoughts of God are embodied in the Person, work, life and death of Jesus Christ, His dear Son. With all reverence, we say that God never could have revealed Himself so fully in any other way than by giving "His only-

begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Well did Dr. Watts sing—

"Nature with open volume stands,
To spread her Maker's praise abroad.
And every labor of his hands
Shows something worthy of a God.
But in the Grace that rescued man
His brightest form of Glory shines
Here on the Cross, 'tis fairest drawn
In precious blood and crimson lines.
Here I behold His inmost heart,
Where Grace and vengeance strangely join
Piercing His Son with sharpest smart,
To make the purchased pleasures mine."

So, you see, dear Friends, the expression, "the Word of God," has a very wide range. But my text bids me remind you of something very sweet—"Man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live." It is beautiful to think of the Scripture as *proceeding out of the mouth of God.* Do not look upon that scroll of parchment on which it is written and over which the critics quibble and quarrel. They stumble at almost every letter and word of it and so miss its meaning and spirit, but, as for you, pray the Holy Spirit to speak it into your heart as coming immediately from the mouth of God! When Cowper looked up at his mother's portrait, after, to his great sorrow, she had long been gone from earth, he cried—

"O that those lips had language!"

Well, you are to regard this Word of God as constantly coming forth fresh from His lips. The Holy Spirit puts into the Word a power which makes it go right into your heart with the very tone and majesty of the God of Grace, the Father of your spirit! This manna falls ever fresh from Heaven. The Israelites never had stale bread in the wilderness. They gathered the "angels' food" new every morning, just as it came down from the skies. In the same way, take every passage of God's Word as coming to you fresh from God. Regard it as your Heavenly Father speaking it straight to your heart!

I was reading, one day, in one of Mark Guy Pearse's books, a pretty thought that I had never noticed before. He puts into the mouth of a very simple but godly man, who is talking about his Heavenly Father, words something after this fashion—"I am quite sure my Father will take care of me. He never rested during the six days of creation till He had fitted up a place for His child to come and live in. Until He had put the finishing stroke on it and got the house all ready for Adam, He would not rest at all. And now my Heavenly Father will not rest until He has made Heaven ready for me—and made me ready for Heaven—and all that I need on the way, He will surely give me." When I read that, it came just as fresh to me as if I had seen the second Chapter of the Book of Genesis written! It did not look to me like an old, stale record, but a fresh and living message proceeding out of the mouth of God—then and there! And there is many a dear child of God who, taught of the Spirit, has given new read-

ings to old texts and, as it were, hung the old oil paintings in a better light, till we have said, as we have looked at them, "Can they be the same pictures? They seem to have fresh beauty and fresh force put into them!" This is what you are to feed upon, dear children of God—His own Word, as you have it here. But you must feed upon it as continually coming forth out of His very mouth.

The text further says, "*by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD* does man live." Don't you be at all disturbed, dear Friends, concerning the Doctrine of Inspiration, as to how the Bible is Inspired, whether by this process, or by that. I do not much mind how it is—I know that it is Inspired and that is enough for me—and I believe that it is *verbally* Inspired. I find the Apostle Paul hanging a weighty argument upon the use of a singular or a plural, where he says, "He says not, And to seeds, as of many but as of one, And to your *Seed,* which is Christ." I find the Apostle Peter dwelling upon a word spoken by a woman and making it teach an important lesson—"Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him, lord," and so forth. And, you remember that, not long ago, we had the text, "And it shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me Ishi; and shall call Me no more Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name," in which a great Truth of God was involved in the use of two words that were somewhat similar in meaning. [See Sermon #2571, Volume 44—*The Climax of God's Love*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

I do not say that either of our English versions is Inspired, for there are mistakes in the translation, but if we could get at the original text, just as it was first written, I am not afraid to say that every jot or tittle—every crossed "t" of it and every dot of each "i"—was Infallibly Inspired by God the Holy Spirit! I believe in the Infallibility and the Infinity of Holy Scripture! God Inspired the whole record, Genesis as well as Revelation, and all that is between—and He desires us to believe in one part of the Word as much as another. If you do not believe that, it will not be food to you. I am sure that it will not—it will only be a kind of emetic to you and not food. It cannot feed your soul as long as you are disputing about it. If it is not God's Word, then it is man's word, or the devil's word—and if you care to live on the devil's word, or on man's word, I do not! But God's Word is food for the soul that dwells with God and it cannot be satisfied with anything else.

II. Now let us pass on to our second point which is THE USE WE ARE TO MAKE OF GOD'S WORD. We are to live on it.

I was sitting, one day, in the New Forest, under a beech tree. I like to look at the beech and study it, as I do many other trees, for every tree has its own peculiarities and habits, its special ways of twisting its boughs and growing its bark, and opening its leaves and so forth. As I looked up at that beech and admired the wisdom of God in making it, I saw a squirrel running round and round the trunk and up the branches, and I thought to myself, "Ah, this beech tree is a great deal more to you

than it is to me, for it is your home, your living, your all." Its big branches were the main streets of his city and its little boughs were the lanes. Somewhere in that tree he had his house and the beech mast was his daily food—he lived on it. Well now, the way to deal with God's Word is not merely to contemplate it, or to study it, as a student does, but to live on it as that squirrel lives on his beech tree! Let it be to you, *spiritually*, your house, your home, your food, your medicine, your clothing—the one essential element of your soul's life and growth.

There are some whom I know who take God's Word and play with it. They are interested in its narratives—they study its histories in the light of modern research—and so on. But it was not meant merely for such a purpose as that. Loaves of bread are not put on the table for you to carve them into different shapes simply to look at—they are intended to be eaten. That is the proper use for bread and that is the proper use for God's Word!

Some do even worse than this—they do not so much play with the Bible as fight over it—they contend fiercely for a Doctrine and condemn everybody who cannot accept their particular interpretation of it! I think that I have heard preachers who have seemed to me to bring out a Doctrine on purpose to fight over it. I have a dog that has a rug in which he sleeps and when I go home, tonight, he will bring it out and shake it before me—not that he particularly cares for his rug, but because he knows that I shall say, "I'll have it," and then he will bark at me and, in his language say, "No, you won't." There are some people who fetch out the Doctrines of Grace just in that way! I can see them trotting along with the Doctrine of Election just in order that some Arminian may dispute with them about it and that they may then bark at him! Do not act so, Beloved! The worst implement with which you can knock a man down is the Bible! It is intended for us to live upon—not to be the weapon of our controversies—but our daily food upon which we rejoice to live.

I do not think that our Bibles were given to us that we might merely employ them as telescopes to peer into the heavens, to try to find out what is going to happen in 50 years' time. I am weary with the prophecies and speculations that, as a general rule, end in nothing! I know some brethren with whom one cannot talk about any passage but they say, "Oh, you have not seen the last little book of R. B. S. (those are not the real initials of the good Brother), in which he says that this passage does not apply to us, it is meant only for the Jews." Or else, "That was only for the Church in the wilderness, and not for us in these days." Let us not so misuse the Word of God, but prize it as the bread upon which we are to live! "Man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live."

"But how can we live on words?" asks one. You have spoken well. We cannot live on words if they are the words of men. But there is nothing like the Word of God to live upon! To that Word we owe our life. He spoke us into being, He spoke the soul into our body. By that Word of God we

are daily kept alive—let God but reverse it and say, "Return, you children of men"—and we must at once go back to the dust from where we came.

Certainly, it is by God's Word that we began to live *spiritually*—we believed on Christ through the effectual working of His Word. The living and incorruptible Seed was sown in our heart and by it we began to live. And it is by that same Word that our soul has been sustained in life. Up to this moment you and I have received no nutriment from the Holy Spirit except by that Word of God which is the food of the spiritual Israel in the wilderness of this world. Christ said, "My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed." And it is by Him, as the Word of God, that our life is yet further to grow. There is no development of the Christian that will come to him in any way but by God's Word—Incarnate or Inspired. He who spoke us into being must speak us into yet stronger being! Faith is God's gift, but so is assurance. The very first spark of life is the gift of God's Grace, but so is the seraphic flame of zeal. That all comes from God's Word and when we are about to enter Heaven, the last touch that shall perfect us will be given by no engraving tool, but the Word of God! Our Lord prayed for His disciples, "Sanctify them through Your Truth; Your Word is Truth." And that Word shall complete the entire process! See, then, Beloved, on what your inmost spirit must live—God's holy Word!

Brothers and Sisters, may I ask you whether you are all sufficiently aware of this great Truth of God? You never received spiritual life by your own feelings. It was when you believed God's Word that you lived! And you will never get an increase of spiritual life and grow in Grace by your own feelings or your own doings. It must still be by your believing the promises and feeding on the Word! There is no other food for your souls—all else, in the end, will prove but husks. Therefore, are you hungry? Come and feed upon the Word! Have you backslidden? Come and feed again upon the Word! God heals His people by feeding them. "How so?" you ask. When the church at Laodicea was neither cold nor hot, so that Christ felt that He must spew her out of His mouth, yet even then He said to the angel of that church, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me." I am bold to say, "There is no cure for lukewarmness like a good supper with Christ!" If He enters in and sups with you, and you with Him, your lukewarmness will disappear at once! Do not begin to be saved by faith and then go on to be saved by works—do not try to mix the two! If you are of the house of Sarah, do not bow your knee before Hagar and go back to the bondwoman. If you have lived on the pure, simple Word, crediting it by a living, God-given faith, go on to live in the same way and grow by the Word. Feed thereon continually, that you may be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

III. Now I come to my last point, which I want to insist upon very urgently, and that is THE ADAPTATION OF THE WORD OF GOD FOR THE

FEEDING of our souls. "By every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live."

"By every word." If you restrict yourselves in your food to one or two articles, every physician will tell you that there is a danger that your body may not be supplied with every form of nutriment that it requires. A good wide range of diet is recommended to those who would have vigorous health. And in spiritual things, if you keep to one part of God's Word, you may live on it, but the tendency will be for you not to attain to complete spiritual health through the lack of some nutriment with which the Word would have supplied you had you used it all. Every Word of God is that upon which man lives in the highest and healthiest state.

Look, for instance, at *the Doctrine* in the Word of God. "I do not like doctrine," says one. Do you know what you are saying? You are a disciple, yet you do not like teaching, for doctrine means teaching. For a disciple to say that he does not like to be taught, is as good as to say that he does not like to be a disciple and, in fact, that he is not one in the true meaning of that term. Whatever Truth is laid down in God's Word, it is important for us to know it.

"Oh," says one, "but there are some Truths of God that are not important." I do not know of any. In places where they cut diamonds, they sweep up the dust because the very dust of diamonds is valuable. And in the Word of God, all the Truth is so precious that the very tiniest Truth, if there is such a thing, is still diamond dust and is unspeakably precious! "But," you object, "I do not see that such a Truth would be of any practical use." You may not see it, dear Friend, but it is so. If I could write out my experience as Pastor of this Church, I could show that there have been persons converted to God by Doctrines that some might have thought unlikely to produce that result. I have known the Doctrine of the Resurrection to bring sinners to Christ. I have known scores brought to the Savior by the Doctrine of Election—the very sort of people who, as far as I can see, would never have come if that Truth of God had not happened to be an angular Doctrine that just struck their heart in the right place and fitted into the crevices of their nature. I believe that everything that is in God's Word ought to be preached, ought to be believed and ought to be studied by us! Every Doctrine is profitable for some end or other. If it is not food, it is medicine, and children sometimes need a tonic as much as they need milk. Every plant in God's garden answers some good purpose, so let us cultivate them all, and not neglect any Doctrine.

Yet, when I come to God's Word, I find that it is not all Doctrine, and I discover much of *precept.* Now, perhaps a man says, "I do not care about precepts." We used to have a set of Christian people, so-called, who, if you preached about any duty of a Believer, said at once, "We cannot bear the word, 'duty.' It has a legal sound in it." I remember saying to one who called me "a legal preacher," "That is all right. 'Legal' means, lawful, and you mean, I suppose, that I am a lawful preacher, and that you are an unlawful person to object to my preaching!" But so it used to be, if you

preached good sound Doctrine, if you preached on the privileges of Believers, then they were as pleased as possible. But when you once began to talk about the practical parts of God's Word, then straightway they were offended. No wonder, for their conscience pricked them for their neglect of those portions of the Scriptures! But, dear Friends, we live upon the precepts as well as upon the Doctrines and they have become to us as our necessary food. You know how David said of the Lord's Commandments, "More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter, also, than honey, and the honeycomb; moreover by them is Your servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."

Blessed be God, there is also a large portion of this Book that is taken up with *promises.* Dear Friends, be well acquainted with the promises! I have often found it profitable to consult that little book in which Dr. Samuel Clarke has arranged the promises of Scripture under different heads. It is very helpful, when you are in trouble, to refer to all the promises which are given to those who are in similar circumstances to yours. For instance, to the sick, or to those in poverty, or those suffering from slander. As you read them over, one after the other, you say to yourselves, "This is my checkbook—I can take out the promises as I need them, sign them by faith, present them at the great Bank of Grace—and come away enriched with present help in time of need." That is the way to use God's promises, so that they shall minister to the life of our spirit.

But, dear Friends, much of God's Word is taken up with *histories.* Here you have the story of the Creation and of the Fall, of Abraham and of Isaac, of Jacob, of Moses, and of the kings and princes and people of Israel. You ask, perhaps, "Is this food?" Certainly! There are critics, nowadays, who speak very slightingly of the Old Testament and talk as if the Gospels comprised the whole of God's Word. Even the Epistles are reckoned to be of inferior quality. But this is all wrong! It is by every Word of God that man lives and, often, a history, giving us an example of faith, or a proof of God's faithfulness in helping His tried people, becomes more suitable food than the promise, by itself, might be! There is more force, men say, in the concrete, than there is in the abstract. Certainly there is more power in a thing put into actual life than there is in that same thing merely stated in words. If ever you go to the picture galleries of Versailles, you may walk through—I was about to say miles of galleries, among portraits of kings and notable men of different ages—but you do not see anybody stopping to look at them! And neither do you care to see them yourself. They are just portraits, but, downstairs there are paintings of the same men, only they are pictured in battle array, or in various positions which show them in action. Now you stand and look at them, for you are interested in the representation of the scenes in which they lived. So, sometimes, God's promises hang up like pictures on the wall and we do not notice them. But when we see men who have trusted those promises and proved the truth of them, then there is a sort of human interest about them which wins our attention and speaks to our

hearts. Never neglect the historical parts of God's Word, for they are full of food to the children of God.

It is precisely the same with regard to *the prophecies.* I once heard Mr. George Muller say that he liked to read his Bible through, again and again, and he liked, especially to read those portions of the Bible which he did not understand. That seems rather an amazing thing to say, does it not? For what profit can come to us if we do not understand what we read? The good man put it to me like this. He said, "There is a little boy who is with his father and there is a good deal of what his father says that he comprehends and takes it in, and he is very pleased to hear his father talk. But sometimes his father speaks of things that are quite beyond him, yet the boy likes to listen—he learns a little, here and there, and, by-and-by, when he has listened year after year, he begins to understand what his father says as he never would have done if he had run away whenever his father began to talk beyond his comprehension." So is it with the prophecies and other deep parts of God's Word. If you read them once or twice, but do not comprehend them, still study them—give your heart to them, for, by-and-by, the precious Truth of God will permeate your spirit and you will insensibly drink wisdom which otherwise you never would have received!

Every part of the Word of God is food for the soul. So, dear Friends, it may be that there is a *threatening* message which speaks very sharply to you, but which is also most profitable for you. Perhaps some Sabbath you go out of the Tabernacle and you say, "Our Pastor has not comforted us this morning. He seems to have harrowed us and plowed us." Yes, I know that it is so, sometimes, but it is for your profit, for, as Hezekiah said, "by these things men live." It frequently happens that we need humbling, proving, testing and bringing down—and every right-minded child of God will say, "Do not let my training be according to my mind, but let it be according to God's mind." That sermon which pleases us most may not profit us at all—while the one which grieves and vexes us may, perhaps, be doing us a most essential service. When the Word of God searches you through and through, open your heart to it! Let the wind blow right through your whole being and carry away every rag and relic that ought to be taken from you.

There are some of God's Words that are very short, but they contain an abundance of food for the soul. I have sometimes stood still, as I have been looking at a text, and I have felt like Jonathan when he found the honey. I could not eat it all. I could only dip my rod into it and taste it. And I wanted to call you all up, to see if you could clear this forest which was so laden with sweetness. At other times, on my way home, when I have not got much, myself, during the sermon, the Master has given me a feast on the road, and I have laughed to myself, again and again, for very joy of heart over some precious passage out of which fresh light has broken to cheer my spirit and make me glad in the Lord! Oh, keep to the Word, my Brothers and Sisters! Keep to it as God's Word and as coming out of His mouth. Suck it down into your soul, you cannot have too

much of it! Feed on it day and night, for thus will God make you to live the life that is life, indeed!

If there is a poor soul here that needs to find eternal life, my dear Friend, I bid you seek it in God's Word and nowhere else. "I thought I would go home and pray," says one. Do so, but, at the same time, remember that your prayers are of little worth without God's Word. Hear God's Word, first, and then go and tell God your own word, for it is in His *Word of promise* rather than in your word of prayer that salvation is to be found! Remember that grand sentence in the Book of Exodus where God says, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." It is not said, "When *you* see the blood," but when I see it! So, when God looks upon Christ's shed and sprinkled blood, it is then that He looks on you with pity and compassion! Look where God looks and then your eyes will meet His! If you look to Christ, and God looks to Christ, then you shall see eye to eye, and you shall find joy and peace in believing. God the Father admires Christ. Poor soul, do you admire Him, too? Then there will be a point on which you will both be agreed. God the Father entrusts His honor and glory to Christ—trust your soul with Christ—for so you will be agreed. God grant that you may do so this very hour! Remember this one text as you go your way—"He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." God grant that every one of you may have that everlasting life, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—191, 711, 192.

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

REFUSING TO BE COMFORTED
NO. 2578

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 1O, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 18, 1883.

"My soul refused to be comforted."
Psalm 77:2.

WHEN you meet with a person in great distress, you feel at once a desire to comfort him. That is to say, if you have an ordinarily tender heart. You cannot bear to see another in trouble without trying to minister to that diseased heart. But supposing that the person refuses to be comforted? Then you are foiled. What can you do? It is as though you met with a hungry man and offered him bread, but he rejected it. You tried to give him daintier food, but he scorned it. You asked him what he could eat, but he altogether refused to accept any form of nourishment. Then what could you do? Your cupboard might be full and the door might be freely opened, but if the man would not eat, you could not remove his hunger. So, if a man in trouble refuses to be comforted, how are you to cheer and solace him? One man can lead a horse to the water, but a thousand cannot make him drink if he will not—and when a man in trouble refuses to be comforted, then lover and friend are put far from him—and his acquaintance into darkness. Indeed, they soon need to be comforted, for disquietude is contagious and, sometimes, those who come to comfort another, go away provoked by his perversity. Many a man, whose heart was full of pity, has, at last, become indignant, and so has increased the sorrow which he intended to comfort—he has grown angry with the man who willfully put aside what was intended to encourage him.

With those few prefatory remarks, let us come to the text. "My soul refused to be comforted." Note, concerning a man in such a case, first, *possibly he may be right.* Secondly, *he is probably wrong.* Thirdly, *he may one day regret his conduct,* as did Asaph, for, while he tells us that his soul refused to be comforted, he writes it down—not as an example for us to follow, but for our warning!

I. First, then, when a man's soul refuses to be comforted, POSSIBLY HE MAY BE RIGHT.

He may have a great spiritual sorrow and someone who does not at all understand his grief may proffer to him *a consolation which is far too slight.* Not knowing how deep the wound is, this foolish physician may think that it can be healed with any common ointment. I have known men to say to a person in deep distress things which have really aggra-

vated him and his malady, too. "As he that takes away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singes songs to a heavy heart." "Oh," they have said, "there is really nothing the matter with you, after all!" When the arrows of God were drinking up your soul, they have said, "you are low-spirited." Who would not be low-spirited when he has to face an angry God? "You are very nervous," says another. "I am afraid you are going off into religious melancholy—you need cheerful society and amusement." That is poor consolation for one who feels that he is ready to die and that his soul chooses strangling rather than life! Reduced as he is to such a point of agony in his spirit, it is no wonder that the man should put away these comforters and say with Job, "'Miserable comforters are you all.' Mine is not a sorrow that can be removed by the bowl or by the violin. Mine is not a grief that can be charmed away with your merriment, or laid to sleep by your ridicule. The wound is too deep and too severe for you to cure." The man acts rightly when he puts aside these physicians without skill, of whom it may be said, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, where there is no peace." You may send such comforters away from you, for it is right to refuse to be comforted by them. You will do well to say, with Toplady—

"If my Lord Himself reveals,
No other good I want,
Only Christ my wounds can heal,
Or silence my complaint.
He that suffered in my stead,
Shall my Physician be.
I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me."

So, too, it is equally right to refuse to be comforted *when the comfort is untrue.* When a man is under a sense of sin, I have known his friends say to him, "You should not fret; you have not been so very bad. You have been, indeed, a very good sort of fellow." One says, "I can recollect how kind you were to So-and-So and how honestly you behaved under such-and-such a temptation. You have not committed any very terrible sin—God help the world if you are a great sinner! I do not know what will become of the rest of us." Another says, "You have only to pray and go to a place of worship, perhaps be a little more regular in your attention to religion and it will all come right again. You are not so bad as you think you are." Be off with you! Such talk as that is a lie and the man whom God has really awakened to feel his state by nature will refuse to be comforted by such falsehoods as those! However friendship may flatter, the man himself says, "I know that I have broken God's Law and that I deserve His wrath." Conscience will not be quieted by all the soft speeches of officious but ignorant friends! I charge you, before God, if the Spirit of Truth has begun to trouble you, never drink these sweet but poisonous consolations! Never think that you are good, or that you can make yourself good. Refuse to be comforted in any such way. That comfort which does not come from truth and from God's Word, applied by the Holy Spirit, is a comfort to be rejected with scorn!

We have known others who have tried to comfort poor, mourning, repentant sinners *in an unhallowed way*. They have said, "You need to raise your spirits. I can recommend you some fine old wine which will do you a world of good." Another will say, "You should really mix a little more in society and shake yourself up. You should get with some happy, lively people—they would soon take this melancholy out of you." Have you ever heard the story which was current in Rowland Hill's day, and which I believe was true, about a certain comic actor who, at that time, carried all the sway in London and made all laugh who went to see and hear him? The poor man, himself, suffered from depression of spirit to the very worst degree, insomuch that life had become a weariness to him. He went to consult a certain physician who was noted for dealing with hypochondriacs and melancholy persons. The doctor said to him, "Now, my Friend, you are evidently very low in spirits—you should go to the theater. I went the other night, hearing So-and-So, and he made me laugh at such a rate that I am quite sure, if you went and heard him, you would soon get rid of all your melancholy." The patient took the doctor by the hand and said, "Doctor, I am that man. I have made all London laugh, but my heart is breaking all the while." What said Solomon? "I said in my heart, Go to now, I will prove you with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure. And, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad. And of mirth, What does it do?" I am sure that a person who is really troubled in spirit will increase his sorrow if he attempts to cure it in that way. It is only putting more fuel on the flame. It seems such a mockery to the spirit, when it is burdened with a sense of sin, to tell it to dance and make merriment! "Can I be merry on the brink of Hell?" cries the sorrowful man. "In danger every moment of death and certain that if death came, I should be lost, can I enjoy mirth? It cannot be!"

There was a certain king of Hungary, a pious, gracious man, who was, at one time, deeply cast down and depressed. He had a brother, a worldly courtier, who rallied him about his despondency and, as far as he dared, mocked the poor broken heart of the king. It was the custom in Hungary that if a man was to be suddenly executed, a trumpeter should stand under his window and sound a blast of a certain kind—and then he was taken away to be put to death. The king sent the trumpeter, at the dead of night, to sound that blast under his brother's window. The courtier knew what it meant, so he arose at once, but he begged the executioner to first take him to the king—and there he stood, white as a sheet and trembling from head to foot. "Brother," said the king, "what ails you?" "What ails me?" he said, "why, you sent your trumpeter under my window, and he sounded the death-blast, and I suppose that I am to die!" "Well," answered the king, "you tremble now, yet it is only because you are to die, whereas I have heard the thunder-blast of God and I stand in fear of everlasting judgment! Now, dear brother," he added, "perhaps you can sympathize with me. I only sent the trumpeter that you might be enabled to look with a little more compassion upon me when I am in trouble before God."

Ah, it is not laughter or mirth that will comfort the soul that has heard the voice of God saying, "You have sinned and I must punish you. You

have lived a careless, godless life, and now you must come to judgment. Can you answer for one of a thousand when I shall set your *sins* before My face? When I shall bring forth a plummet to try you and to see how you stand, how will you endure that test?" No, no! Put aside all those hollow, unhallowed, empty comforts, and say, "My soul refuses to be comforted in that way."

In a word, Brothers and Sisters, let me say that if your hearts are troubled on account of sin, refuse every comfort except that which comes through being washed in the precious blood of Christ which can make us whiter than snow! *Refuse every comfort short of being born again and made a new creature in Jesus*! Make this solemn resolve—"I will sooner die in prison than be let out except by His dear pierced hands. I will tremble before the wrath of God rather than I will dare to presume upon His mercy. I will wait till I have looked into the dear face of Him who died for me, and have read my pardon, there, before I will be comforted." If you resolve not to be comforted except in that Scriptural way, you will do well.

II. But now, in the second place, with brevity, I want to show when this refusal is wrong. PROBABLY HE IS WRONG who says, "My soul refused to be comforted."

It is quite wrong *if it is a temporal matter that causes your sorrow.* Why do you refuse to be comforted, my Friend? "I have lost one who was very dear to me—my beloved mother." "I have lost my child," says another. "It is my husband who has been taken away," says a third, while a fourth cries, "I have been bereaved of my dearest friend, and my soul refuses to be comforted." What, then, have you nobody left? "No, nobody." And has God done you a wrong? Did not your mother belong to Him? Was not your child His? He has only taken back what He lent you for a while—and because you have lost this one cistern, will you never drink of the fountain? Because the star is gone, will you never enjoy the sunlight? O dear Friend, I pray you, talk not so!

"Ah," says another, "but I have lost my health! I found out, but a few days ago, that I have a deadly disease which will take me off, before long and, therefore, I refuse to be comforted." What? You will go down to your grave rebelling against God? Why should you not be sick? Better people than you have gone Home by consumption, or cancer, or by some other malady. Would it not be well to make your submission to God about that matter and ask that you may have a Heaven to go to, and a place of joy when death comes? "Ah," cries another, "but all my earthly prospects are blighted. I thought that I should get on in the world, but now I find that I cannot, the door is locked against me. I can never be comforted." Are there no other doors? Are you sure that what you call your prospects would have been blessings to you if you had realized them? Does not God know better than you do and will it not be wise for you to pluck up courage and, as the world's poet says—

"To take arms against a sea of troubles,
And, by opposing, end them"?

Better far is it to act like that than to sit down in sullen gloom, or in fierce wrath against God!

"Ah," says another, "but mine is a very peculiar trouble. My love has been slighted. One whom I loved very dearly has proven faithless and discarded me." Yes, and your heart is broken, and well it may be. But, my Friend, will you therefore refuse to love Him who never forsakes those on whom He once sets His affection? Would it not be wiser to turn the current of your heart's love towards Him who is faithful and true, and who loves even to all eternity? That would be a wiser course of action, surely! Refuse not to be comforted, I pray you—you are only driving the dagger deeper and deeper into your wounds. You are making the bitter waters more bitter. All that you do in this direction is but increasing your sorrow. You are like sailors pumping the seawater into the ship instead of pumping it out! You are heaping on another burden, much heavier than God has put there, by refusing to be comforted. Instead of doing that, think of the mercies that you still have, think of how God can bless your troubles to you, think of the shortness of life, think of the glories of Heaven, think of the sufferings of your Lord who endured much more than you are called to bear—and no longer refuse to be comforted, for, if you do, worse troubles may come to you.

I heard a woman say to her child, as I passed her door, "If you don't leave off crying, I'll give you something to cry about." And I have known that to happen with some of the Lord's children. They have had very small troubles and they have fretted and rebelled against God until they have had a much greater sorrow—they have had something to cry about! Oh, do not refuse to be comforted, but yield yourself to God! Willingly submit to the discipline of your dear Father's hand.

But now I will suppose that yours is *a spiritual trouble* and yet you refuse to be comforted. Listen to me, I pray you, for a few minutes, for I am sure that I shall describe some of you. The Gospel is meant for sinners, for guilty sinners, for Hell-deserving sinners. It is meant for persons just like you, yet you put it away from you and refuse to be comforted. It would be such a comfort to you if you accepted it—you would have such joys as you never knew before. But no, you will not touch it, you turn aside from it. There are kind friends who, at one time, encouraged you to cast yourself upon Christ, but now you try to avoid them, you get out of their way if you can. You feel so sad that you do not want to be cheered, you scarcely desire to be encouraged. Perhaps I speak to some who have gone so far astray that they say, "We cannot go back to the House of Prayer now." It is a horrible thing when people fall into such depths of sorrow that when they most need to come and hear, and be comforted, the devil says to them, "Don't go there any more—you will hear nothing for your comfort. The preacher will only confirm your condemnation," and so he tries to keep them away from the means of Grace. "Oh," says one, "I used to delight in the Prayer Meeting, but I dare not go to it now! I feel that no prayers will ever be any blessing to me. I used to love to hear Pastor's voice, once, and I have laughed for very joy while hearing it. But now I do not want to listen to it any longer." No, you are refusing to be comforted.

It is also a terrible thing when Satan leads men to neglect the private means of Grace. They shut up the Bible and do not read it, being afraid

that every Word should turn out to be a curse that will only make their sorrow deeper. Or, if they do read a promise, they say, "That is not for us. It may be true to everybody else, but not to us." As to private prayer, such a man says, "I cannot pray. God would not hear me, anyway, I am such a hypocrite. I have been such a backslider, I am so false, I am so guilty. It is no use for me to try to pray." That which ought to be the channel of sweetest consolation is neglected by those who refuse to be comforted! Some of them will even go so far as to deny the testimony of God. He says that He is merciful—they say that He is not. God declares that there is a propitiation for sin in the blood of Christ—they say that there is none. Jesus says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out"—they say that He would cast them out if they came to Him. He invites them to come—they say that they cannot come. While He bids them to come near to Him and warns them that there is nothing in their way but their own evil hearts—yet they give God the lie and reject the only Savior!

They also refuse the testimony of those of us who are God's witnesses—though this is but a small matter after refusing God's own testimony! We come and say, "Friend, if you will believe, you shall see the Glory of God. If you will simply cast yourself upon Christ, you shall live." Yet they do not believe us. There are some of you who would not doubt anything that I told you, I am sure that you would not—your esteem and affection would lead you to receive almost anything that I stated as fact—and yet you have put away from you, you have refused and rejected that glorious testimony which it is my life's work to tell to you, namely, that Jesus Christ will receive you and cleanse you from every sin, if you will but come to Him just as you are and put your trust in Him! No, you refuse to be comforted. But how wicked this refusal is! What a wrong you do to our honest love! What a wrong you do to the matchless love of God!

Do you not remember the story of the good man who wanted to teach his little girl what faith was? He went down into the cellar, took away the ladder by which he had descended, and called to his child. "Ruth," he said, "jump into my arms." It was very dark down there, so she said, "Please, father, I can't see you." Then he replied, "you do not need to see me, I can see you—jump down." With a merry laugh she sprang into the dark and was, in an instant, resting on her father's bosom. Now, God bids us do just that! Can you not, by faith, take a leap in the dark, into your Heavenly Father's arms? This is what you will do if you are really His child—but you will not do it unless you can say, "I will trust and not be afraid."

I will tell you why people sometimes refuse to be comforted. One says, "I have been depressed such a long time." Yes, but when the night is long, is that any proof that the morning will not come? It looks to me to be a good argument that the daylight is not very far off. "Oh," says another, "but my depression is so deep! You cannot conceive how miserable I am." Can I not? I think I have been in that dark dungeon where you now are and in the very corner where you are hiding. But even if I could not fully sympathize with you, the depth of your distress is to me an argument for your comfort, for God will first help the most helpless—and

where there is the most misery, there will His mercy most swiftly come. So I look upon you with great hopefulness! If you are so thoroughly broken down, the Lord will surely speak comfort to *you* among the very first. "Ah," says another friend, "but I am under the impression that I shall never be saved." Perhaps you are, but I am under another impression, namely, that you *will* be saved! And I am under another impression, which I know is true—that is, if you will only cast yourself upon Christ by a simple faith, you shall be saved at once! I know that impression is true because here is the seal that made it—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." These are the words of Him who cannot lie or change! Do you still refuse to be comforted?

"Oh," says one, "but if you knew me, Sir, you would not talk so, for I have been such a great sinner!" I think that is very likely. "Oh, but I mean it, Sir!" I hope you do. I trust you are not adding lies to your other sins. "But, Sir, I have been *such* a sinner!" Yes, I know what you mean, and I believe it. And I will tell you something about yourself that you probably do not believe—you are a worse sinner than you think you are. "Oh, that cannot be!" you say. But I tell you that it is—you do not know what a sinner you are. Sin is a more horrible thing than imagination, itself, can conceive it to be. "But I deserve the hottest place in Hell," says one. Yes, but suppose that it is so, and that all you say is true? Yet, in the name of God, I tell you that "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," for, "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." What is your sin? Have you committed falsehood, theft, fornication, murder? Is there any crime which you have committed which I dare not mention—some secret sin which has polluted you and left you a black blot upon the face of God's earth? Yet come along with you, whoever you may be! If you are the sweepings of Helldom, yet come along with you, for Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost—let me say that word again—"*He is able to save to the uttermost* them that come unto God by Him."

Do not refuse to be comforted, for if you do, you will be a spiritual suicide! The man who will not eat and so dies of starvation is as much a suicide as he that puts the pistol to his head and blows out his brains. He that rejects Christ, damns himself as surely as he that gives himself, body and soul, to the devil. He that refuses what God has provided and will not have pardon through the precious blood, dashes himself upon the bosses of Jehovah's buckler and fixes himself upon the point of the javelin of Divine Justice! Do not do it, I implore you! Be not among those who refuse to be comforted!

III. But now, lastly, for my time is nearly gone, YOU WILL HAVE TO REPENT OF REFUSING TO BE COMFORTED.

Possibly you will have to repent in a very terrible way. Suppose, now, that you should refuse to be comforted, and so should *willfully go into a yet darker and deeper dungeon of despair*? Suppose that your Christian friends should grow weary of you—I hope they will not—but suppose that godly man, or that godly woman who has so long followed you up, should, at last, despair of you and leave? Where would you be, then? And suppose that because you shut your eyes to the Light of God, God should

take it away? What if you should have to move to a region where nobody will want to comfort you, where no minister will labor and travail for your soul's salvation, where you shall sit under a dry and lifeless ministry, or perhaps under none at all—and you shall be left to go on down, down, down? God prevent it! But if ever that should be your sad lot, I hope there may still remain about you sufficient relics of life to make you say, "Oh, that I had been willing to be comforted when I might have been, and had accepted the testimony of Grace before I had passed beyond the reach of those blessed means of mercy!" But I do not mean to dwell upon that thought, for I have something much more cheerful to say.

I hope that many here present who have refused to be comforted, will yet regret it *when they shall be enjoying the fullness of comfort.* One of the things that I have sometimes said to myself, when I have been alone, has been this, "How foolish you are!" And if anybody had heard me, he would have known that I was upbraiding myself in the spirit of Christian and Hopeful when they were locked up in Giant Despair's castle. You remember how Bunyan tells us that the pilgrims began to pray on Saturday, about midnight, and continued in prayer till almost the break of day, when Christian called out, "What a fool am I, thus to lie in a stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom, called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle." So he pulled it out of his bosom, put it in the lock, opened the door of the dungeon, and they soon were out! When they came to the outer door leading to the castle yard, the key fitted that, and they went through. Then they came to the great iron gate—the lock went horribly hard, but Christian kept working away at it and, at last, the bolt shot back, the big gate was open—and they escaped.

But Giant Despair heard the noise and came down. And he was just about to fall upon his poor prisoners, when he was taken with a shaking fit—I have always been glad that the cruel old giant used to have epilepsy, so he could not catch the two pilgrims—and away they went! I am sure that when they got out, Christian kept saying to himself, "What a fool I have been! What a fool I have been! I have been lying in that dungeon all this while, when I might have been out ever so long ago." If I ever hear you, who have had a similar experience, cry, "What a fool I have been," I shall say, "That is quite right! You have hit the nail on the head this time," for, whenever a man doubts the mercy of God, the best thing that I can say of him is that he is a fool! I could say a far worse thing than that, but when you refuse the sweet mercy, the tender love, the overflowing forgiveness, the generous kindness of the heart of Christ, you certainly act like a fool. And then, when you come to your right mind, I am sure that you will ask yourself, "How could I have refused so long to be comforted?"

Now, finally, *when you and I get to Heaven,* we shall regret that we ever refused to be comforted. "Oh," says a poor sinner over there, "now you are drawing the long bow." Which do you mean—for myself or for you? "Why, Sir, you said, 'When you and I get to Heaven.'" Very well, which is the, "you," and which is the, "I," that you are quibbling about? Do you think that it is such a very great wonder that *I* should get to

Heaven? If you do, I altogether agree with you, for it will be a wonder, indeed! "No," you say, "I mean that it will be a wonder if *I* get there." Yes, and I, too, think it will be so. You and I will be about equal wonders if we get there—and when we are there, by the rich mercy of God, by the infinite love of Christ—and we *shall* be, you know, as surely as we are here if we will but believe in Christ—you and I will meet together, one day, in Heaven. Why should we not? I will promise to meet you there! Come, we will make a bargain of it—I am going by Christ, the Way, and if you go by Christ, the Way, we shall get to the same place! And there will be the King in His beauty. I will guarantee you that you will not take much notice of me, or I of you, for the sight of the King will be so ravishing! Oh, what a Countenance! Oh, what a Glory! Oh, that matchless Lover of our souls! And I believe that, then, we shall, each of us, say, "However could I have refused to be comforted by Him when He had loved me with an everlasting love, when He had chosen me from before the foundation of the world, when He had bought me with His precious blood, when He had sought me by His Holy Spirit, when He had clothed me with His righteousness, when He had taken me into the family and made me His brother and a child of God, when He had gone to Heaven on purpose to prepare a place for me and sent His Spirit down to earth to prepare me for the place? Yet there was a time when I refused to be comforted by Him!" I think, if we could weep in Heaven, we would certainly weep glad tears of deep and solemn regret that ever we should have stood out against Him to whom we are married. Oh, on that wondrous wedding day, when He shall consummate His love and ours, He will *not* say, "You were difficult in the wooing. You refused Me many times." But I do believe that I shall say to myself, "How could I have refused Him? How could I have treated Him so terribly?" And as I look at His dear hands, still scarred, I shall say to Him, "O my Savior, I cost You Your life, Your heart's blood, and though I long refused You, yet You would have me! Oh, love unutterable! How I will love You throughout eternity!" But what regret we must feel that we ever rejected Him! Do not refuse to be comforted, dear Friend—come along with you and take at once the mercy that Jesus waits to give!

One little illustration, and I have done. I have noticed that when a dog is very hungry, he does not stand upon etiquette There is a butcher's shop and no invitation is given to him to enter—but he makes himself very free and in he goes! There is a very nice little bit of meat on the block and the butcher has not the courtesy to offer it to him, though there is no creature that would more welcome it. So what does my friend, the dog, do? Why, he just makes a grab at it, seizes the meat, and then away he goes down the street! Now, if he can only get time to eat it, I will defy the butcher to get it away from him if he has taken it right into himself! I want you, poor Sinner, to be like that dog! There is the mercy of God—you do not believe that you ought to have it. Come and lay hold of it, for let me tell you this—Christ never takes away from the jaws of faith what faith once dares to seize! Take it and you have it! Believe even if you seem to have no right to believe! Commit a heavenly felony upon Divine Mercy! If the devil tells you that it is felony, come and take the mercy all

the same, for he can never steal it from you! If you once get it, you have it forever. Oh, take it, then!—

"Artful doubts and reasoning be
Nailed with Jesus to the tree."

Come and trust Him and He is yours forever! The Lord help you to do it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 77.

This "Psalm of Asaph" has a mournful tone in it. At times the writer is in the deeps, but we may be quite sure that he will end the Psalm cheerfully because he begins it with prayer. No matter what sorrow falls to your lot, if you can pray, you will rise out of it. When Jonah went to the bottoms of the mountains, in the belly of the fish, and took to praying, it was well with him. If you, dear troubled Soul, can but pray, you need not despair.

Verse 1. *I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and He gave ear unto me.* You see, he cried, and he cried again—and at his second call the door of mercy was opened to him. God sometimes makes petitioners wait that they may become more earnest and that they may really feel the value of the thing they are seeking. So Asaph says, "I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice." That is the way to get the blessing! You will often find, dear Friends, that it helps you to pray if you use your voice in prayer—there is no necessity to speak, you can pray without the use of the lips—but it often helps your thoughts if you are able to express them aloud.

2. *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted.* He could not sleep, so he took to prayer. Which is the greater mercy—prayer or sleep—I cannot say. In the Psalmist's case, I suppose that prayer, just then, was better than sleep. His trouble so pressed upon him that it gave him no respite whatever—so all through the night he continued to cry unto the Lord.

3. *I remembered God, and was troubled.* God is the fountain of all comfort, yet there are times when even a godly man can find no comfort in God. Asaph, perhaps, remembered the dark side of God's attributes. Justice seemed to stand over him with a drawn sword. Holiness frowned upon him. Power threatened to crush him. Truth stood up to condemn him. He could not find any comfort, even in his God.

3. *I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah.* He was covered right up, like a ship that has gone down in deep water. "I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah." Whenever you see this word, "Selah," it means lift up the notes, retune the strings of the harp, get the mind and heart ready for something in a rather different strain.

4. *You hold my eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.* You thought that the Psalmist was going to say, "I cannot *sleep*." He has given up the attempt to do that, so now he tries to talk, but utterance fails him. Shallow brooks sound as they flow, but deep griefs are still,

and a man may be so troubled in heart that he cannot speak—he can only explain his sorrow by groaning and tears.

5, 6. *I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night. I commune with my own heart: and my spirit makes diligent search.* He looked back into the records of ancient history to see if God had ever forsaken a praying man. He thought upon his own experience and he remembered how, when it was night with him before, God made him to sing like a nightingale in the darkness. So he asks himself, "Has God changed? Will He give me no songs, now? Will He leave me to perish?" Thus have the best of men, in their sore troubles, had to put to themselves solemn questions, but they have not always been able to answer them.

7-9. *Will the Lord cast me off forever? And will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? Does His promise fail forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah.* If you are a child of God, yet never had to ask these questions, you ought to be very grateful. But if you have to ask them, be very thankful that Asaph asked them before you! And believe that as he had a comfortable answer to them, so shall you. It is always a comfort when you can see the footprints of another man in the mire and the slough, for if that man passed through unharmed, so may you, for his God shall also be your Helper. But only think of this inspired Psalmist, this sweet singer of Israel, being so troubled and broken in spirit that he says, "Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?"

10. *And I said, This is my infirmity.* "This is a trouble appointed to me, I must bear it." Or, "This is because of the weakness of my faith. God has not changed—it is I who has changed. 'This is my infirmity.'"

10. *But I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.* "I will remember what God has done with that right hand of His. I will remember when I used to sit at His right hand—

"'What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill.'"

It is a good thing to make a record of your experiences when they are sweet. You may need that record, one of these days. I do not believe in always keeping a diary, for one is apt to put down more than may be true, but there are times of special mercy when I would say, "Write that down for a memorial and keep it by you, for the day may come when that record will minister comfort to you."

11, 12. *I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will meditate also on all Your work.* "I will not have any more of *my* works—I will meditate on Your work. I will get to You, my God, and think of what You have done; especially of Your works of Grace, how brightly they shine! I will meditate also on all your work."

12, 13. *And talk of Your doings. Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary.* Or, "is in holiness." God's way is sometimes in the sea, but it is always a holy way. God never deals with His people, or with any of His creatures unjustly or unrighteously. "I cannot trace God," Luther once said, "but I

can trust Him." And from that saying of his we have coined the phrase, "To trust Him when you cannot trace Him." When you are unable to see God's footprints because He rides upon the storm, yet still say, "*Your* way, O God, is in holiness."

13, 14. *Who is so great a God as our God? You are the God that does wonders: You have declared Your strength among the people.* See how the Psalmist comforts himself with what God had done—and he went right back to the Red Sea for his illustration! Somehow, God's people in the olden times always liked to sing the Song of Moses. By a kind of instinct, they thought of the Red Sea, as if to remember the redemption that God worked out for His people when He destroyed Pharaoh and all his host. Let us go there, too, and think of the Red Sea of our Savior's blood where all our sins were drowned!

15-17. *You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah. The waters saw You, O God, the waters saw You; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: Your arrows also went abroad.* I suppose that there was a storm at the time of the passage of the Red Sea, so that the deep-mouthed thunder spoke to the quaking heart of Pharaoh, while the flashing lightning set the heavens on flame and made Egypt's chivalry tremble as the horse and his rider went down into the sea.

18, 19. *The voice of Your thunder was in the Heaven: the lightning lighted the world: the earth trembled and shook. Your way is in the sea.* Where you cannot see His footprints, "in the sea," where there seems to be no way at all, there God makes a highway! Are you in such trouble, dear Friend, that you cannot see the possibility of escape? Remember this verse—"*Your* way is in the sea."

19, 20. *And Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known. You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.* There the Psalm stops, just when you thought there was more to be said. The Holy Spirit knows how to leave off—and He closes abruptly with a sublimity seldom equaled. God's people need to know no more than this, that God is leading them! Asaph does not say that Moses and Aaron led them—"*You* led *Your* people." Moses and Aaron were only the Lord's servants and under-shepherds—"You led *Your* people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." May He always be our Leader! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—202, 621, 623.

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

WAITING, HOPING, WATCHING
NO. 2579

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 17, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 22, 1883.

"I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope, My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning—yes, more than they who watch for the morning."
Psalm 130:5, 6.

As we read this Psalm, we noticed, from the opening verses of it, that David was in the depths. He is not the only one of God's people who has been there. If we imagine that the experience of true saints is always a happy, high level of peace, we make a great mistake. They have their rising and their falling, their days and their nights, their summers and their winters. Where there is life, there are pretty sure to be changes. The statues in St. Paul's Cathedral are, I suppose, always cold, but living men are sometimes ready to faint in the heat—and sometimes they are well-near frozen with the cold. If you are a living child of God, expect that you will have many variations in your experience and that sometimes you will be in the depths as others have been. Was not your Lord there? This Psalm is called, in the Latin version, *De profundis,* and I am sure that our Lord, though He is now *in excelsis*—in the very heights—yet had on earth times when He could sing this *De profundis* Psalm—"Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord." Then, how could we have fellowship with Him in His suffering if we were not, sometimes, in the depths, too? How could we know what He felt, how could we be made like unto our Lord if we were not also cast down?

The best of godly men will be, occasionally or even often, in the depths of temporal trouble. David was hunted by Saul, hated by the Philistines, grieved by his son Absalom—he had many trials—and the best of God's people will have their trials, too. Though faith often lifts us up above them, yet there are times when the iron enters into our soul, when, "for a season, if necessary, we are in heaviness through manifold trials."

God's people, too, are sometimes in the depths of spiritual sorrow. They do not always live upon the mountain with their transfigured Master. Sometimes they come into the valley where they are made to feel the power of inbred sin and to mourn over it exceedingly. When the light of God's Countenance is withdrawn, the dearest of His children has to cry, with his Lord on Calvary, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" There are depths of soul-agony which some Christians have never known, but into which others have been plunged again and again. It has

been as much as the saint could do to call his God his own, for his very faith seemed to tremble under the pressure of affliction and depression of spirit. This Psalm ought to comfort you who are in the depths, as you see that others have had to go there, too. But mind that you follow the example of the Psalmist and, *whatever* you are called to suffer, never leave off praying! Whatever else you do, never neglect this one prime means of deliverance. Then you may say with David, "Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord."—

"Long as they live should Christians pray,
For only while they pray they live,"

but especially when their soul seems, as it were, to have found a sepulcher—when, while yet alive, they appear to be sinking down into the depths. Then is the time when, with sevenfold earnestness, they must lift up their hearts and their voices and cry mightily unto the Lord.

One of the designs of Satan, when he finds saints in the depths, is to keep them there, but the wise child of God will cry to his Lord when he gets there, for then Satan cannot keep him there for long. He who cries "out of the depths" will soon be out of the depths! That cry is the voice of life and God will not leave that soul in the depths, or suffer His redeemed one to see corruption there. Up you will rise if you can but cry! There is something marvelous about the power of prayer—when Jonah prayed out of the belly of the fish—he was soon brought up from the depths of the sea to stand on the dry land and to go on his Master's errand. Cry, then, if you are in the depths! If you never cried before, cry now. If you have been accustomed to pray, pull out all the stops of this wonderful organ of prayer and let the music ascend into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, even though it seems to you to be nothing but discord.

But notice, also, that while David thus cried unto the Lord, he made confession of his sin. He felt he could not stand before God on the footing of his personal character. He could not hope to prevail with Jehovah by his own merits, so he pleaded, "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." Come, child of God, if sin is a dark cloud that hides your Lord's face from you, come to Him with this great Truth of God on your tongue and in your heart, "there is forgiveness." When Luther was in great trouble of soul, he was comforted by one who said to him, "Do you not believe your Creed?" "Yes," replied Luther, "I believe the Creed." "Well, then," rejoined the other, "one article in it is, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins.'" Luther's heart was lightened at once by the remembrance of the words in this Psalm, "there is forgiveness." It may be that you have sinned many times and grievously, but, "there is forgiveness." Though a child of God, you have gone far astray from Him—but, "there is forgiveness." You have backslidden sadly and horribly, but, "there is forgiveness." The devil comes and howls at you and tells you that your doom is sealed and your damnation is sure—but, "there is forgiveness." Oh, blessed sentence! "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared."

When David really felt in his soul that whatever the depths might be in which he was plunged, yet there was forgiveness for him—that however feeble his cries might be, there was forgiveness—then he rested in perfect

peace and he said, in the language of the text, "I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning—yes, more than they who watch for the morning."

There are three words on which I am going to speak. The first and the chief word is, *waiting*—"I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait." The next word, which helps the first one, is, *hoping*—"and in His Word do I hope." And then the third word grows out of the first, and that is, *watching*—"My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning." May the Holy Spirit bless us both in speaking and hearing while we meditate upon these three words—waiting, hoping, watching!

I. The first word is, waiting. "I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait."

Upon which I observe, first, that *this is the constant posture of all the saints of God.* Before our Lord Jesus Christ came, all the spiritual people among the 12 tribes were waiting for His appearing. They firmly believed that He would come, yet they died without the sight for which they were looking. Over the door of the great mausoleum of the Old Testament saints is inscribed this epitaph, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off." They were waiters—waiting until the Rod should come forth out of the stem of Jesse—and the Branch should grow out of his roots. Some few of these waiters were found in the Temple when the Lord appeared. You remember the names of Simeon and Anna, who were "waiting for the consolation of Israel"? They had grown gray in waiting, but still they were among "them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." And, at last, Simeon could say, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your Salvation." This expression, waiting for the Lord, describes all the saints, from righteous Abel down to faithful old Simeon who took the Infant Jesus in his arms and blessed God for the appearing of the Messiah, the woman's promised Seed.

But what about the saints since then? They also are, or should be, waiting for the Lord—"Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." Though too many forget it, He has said, "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." This is the Church's glorious hope in which, in some senses, both Jews and Gentiles are now united, for if the Jews are waiting for the coming of the Messiah, so are we, only they, in their unbelief, see not that He has once come. Let it not be said of us that we, in our unbelief, see not that He will come again, but, believing in His First Advent, let us, therefore, patiently wait and longingly look for the time when, "the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which 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." O glorious hope! We are still waiting for its blessed realization!

Yes, and in this respect I may say with Dr. Watts, that—

"The saints on earth, and all the dead,
But one communion make"

in this fellowship of waiting! Fancy not, Beloved, that in Heaven they have no emotion but that of joy! We know that all their emotions are joyous, but among them is this one—that they, too, are waiting until the Lord shall again manifest Himself, for, in the day of His appearing, those disembodied spirits shall put on their resurrection bodies, changed and made like Christ's glorious body! And in that day they shall be united with all the saints who remain upon the earth, for, without them, the glorified spirits above could not be made perfect. That is to say, the Church of God above cannot be perfected as to all its members till those who are still in the world of trial shall be brought Home to meet with them—and so the whole Church shall be "forever with the Lord." Therefore, dear Friends, if any of you are troubled because you are waiting for the return of your Lord and He seems long in coming, I remind you that the whole Church of Christ is waiting—the whole 12 tribes of our spiritual Israel are "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body," at the return of our Lord! The manifestation of the Head will also be the manifestation of all the members of His mystical body. Therefore, be content to be waiters, for all God's saints have been and still are such!

Observe, too, that the *children of God, on earth, are frequently in the posture of waiting as individuals.* Not only as forming part of Christ's body do they wait together with the rest of His people, but each one has to wait individually. In the first dawning of Grace in the soul, when the heart is taught to believe in Jesus, it does not always happen that peace immediately follows upon faith. We meet with many about whose salvation we have no doubt, but they have, themselves, little or no hope as to their own eternal safety. We feel sure that they have really trusted in the Savior and, therefore, have been saved by Him, but, by reason of temptation, or bodily weakness, or a measure of darkness remaining upon them through ignorance, they do not yet know the glorious liberty and assurance of the children of God. I have no doubt that there are many in the fold of Jesus who do not feel themselves at rest—they are waiting until they shall possess full peace with God. They at times enjoy that peace—sweet gleams of sunlight come to them—but they are soon in darkness, again, and their unbelief struggles with their faith. They cannot get further than to cry with that poor man who said to Christ, "Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief."

Well, beloved Brother or Sister, if you are in that condition, you are waiting that your faith may grow—waiting till the blessed Spirit shall be a Spirit of Consolation to you and shall take of the things of Christ and show them to you. You are sitting, as it were, in the porch of the King's house. There is safety in waiting at his doors, but you would be much happier and more at rest if you entered the King's palace and sat at His table! You do trust Him—may you never have any other trust! You are relying upon His righteousness, yet you do not feel that joy and peace which others of the children of God feel. Well, then, you are in this place of waiting and, for a while, perhaps, you will have to exercise that waiting spirit.

Many of us have gone further than that, but we are still waiting—waiting, among other things, for victory over sin. You know that you are forgiven, dear Brothers and Sisters—you are quite sure that you are a child of God and, by God's Grace, you have driven out many sins—but still, when you are fiercely tempted, strongly provoked, or placed in certain trying circumstances, you discover your weakness very sadly. And then your cry is, "Lord, give me victory over sin!" And you will never be content till you have it. Well, go on crying for it out of the very depths! Go on hoping for it through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ! But if it does not come to you and you have, day after day, and even year after year, to bitterly feel that the work of God is not perfected in you, still wait, for the Lord will not leave His work unfinished! He will have regard to the work of His own hands. He will go on with it till it is perfected! But, in the meantime, you will be waiting for the complete victory.

And if you should get that, you will still have to be a waiter, oftentimes, in the matter of prayer. God answers His people's prayers when they ought to be answered. The prayers that are such as you and I, in our most spiritual moments, would wish to have answered, shall be answered. But perhaps not at once. It would be difficult to say how long a Christian may have to wait for answers to prayer. If I remember rightly, there is one godly man who has been praying every day for 36 *years* for one thing and recording his prayers in a book. And other Believers have joined with him, yet the answer has not come. But he as fully expects it as when he first began to pray! I need not mention the Brother's name, but I feel sure that he will be heard and answered, although at present he has not received the blessing he is seeking from the Lord. I have heard of wives praying for the conversion of their husbands through their whole lifetime and never living to see them saved—yet they were brought to the Lord after their partners had gone Home. I have heard of parents pleading for their children by the score of years, together, yet the prayer has not been answered at present. God is keeping them waiting and it is theirs to still wait at the posts of His doors hoping and expecting the blessing they have asked of the Lord.

I will suppose that you have had your prayers answered and, therefore, you have not to wait for that mercy. Yet I am sure you know of something else to wait for. Sometimes we have to wait for conscious fellowship with God. We had it once, but we have lost it, so we cry to have it restored. When we enjoy it, again, we cry for more of it—and when we have more of it, we still cry for more! And when we have the most that we have ever had, then our cry is yet keener for still more—for this sweet love of God enlarges the heart into which it enters! It brings with it a hallowed hungering and thirsting—it kills all unholy craving, but it creates a sacred appetite which is greatly to be desired. O Lord, make my hunger for You to be insatiable! Let it never be satisfied. Enlarge my heart till it is as large as Heaven and then, since, "the Heaven of heavens cannot contain You," make my soul as large as seven heavens and then, since seven heavens could not contain You, go on to enlarge my spirit till I am filled with all the fullness of God! If this is the desire of your heart, you

will always be waiting, asking and longing for more and more of fellowship with your Lord.

"But," you say, "I thought that Christians sometimes reached a point beyond which they could go no further." Then you thought amiss, for that is not the teaching of Scripture. When the Apostle Paul, the most marvelous runner who ever ran the Christian race, had been running for many, many years, he said that he had not yet attained—he even forgot the things that were behind and still pressed forward toward that which was before, the prize of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus! Brothers and Sisters, there is an infinity of Grace and mercy beyond you! Whatever of blessings you have as yet received, you have but sipped from the ever-flowing stream of Eternal Love. You have but gathered a few shells washed up on the shore of the ocean of Boundless Grace. You have not yet received all! You cannot yet enjoy all—you must wait, and wait, and wait, for—

"Still there's more to follow."

Yes, and if we were to get as much of personal blessings as ever we could hold, we should still be waiting! You ask, "What for?" Well, I, for one, am waiting for the Lord to bless my work of faith and labor of love in the preaching of the Gospel. And are not you waiting for the same thing? After every address you give, after every time you have the members of your class gathered together and talked to them about Christ, are you not waiting for more souls to be saved through your service? Do you not wait to be able to better serve God? Are not some of you waiting to have your tongues unloosed—waiting to have your hearts enlarged—waiting for better opportunities of doing God's work, or for more Divine Grace to use the opportunities you have—and waiting for the Divine Seal upon the efforts which you have put forth? I know that it is so and if we could all get that, we would still be waiting—waiting to see all our families saved—waiting to see all our neighbors saved—waiting to see this great London saved—waiting to see all nations bowing at Immanuel's feet! We can never be satisfied until we have that. And if we had it, we would then be waiting, as some of my dear Brothers and Sisters in the Church are just now waiting—waiting to be taken up to their Home above—waiting till men shall say, "The pitcher is broken at the fountain and the wheel is broken at the cistern," because the Lord had said, "Rise up, My love, My fair one and come away." David said, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Your likeness." And we, too, shall be satisfied when we see Christ—satisfied when, in our flesh, we shall see the God that died for us—satisfied when He shall reign upon the earth and we shall reign with Him—satisfied when we shall hear the eternal, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" Yet I imagine that, even then, we shall be waiting, waiting, waiting, throughout eternity, for some fresh revelation of the unutterable, unreliable love of God in Christ Jesus.

You see, dear Friends, how I have tried to set before you this waiting posture of the saints as a whole, and also of each one in particular. Now I want to show you that it is *a very blessed posture,* for waiting tries faith—and that is a good thing—because faith grows by trial! Waiting ex-

ercises patience and that is also a good thing, for patience is one of the choice gifts of God. Waiting endears every blessing when it comes—and thus we get two joys—the joy of waiting for the joy, as well as the joy of enjoying the joy when it comes! We get a better appetite for the banquet by waiting awhile before we sit down to it. Oh, the joy it will be to rest after toil! Oh, the delight of heavenly wealth after earthly poverty! Oh, the bliss of being perfectly rid of every tendency to sin after having struggled with it here for years! Thus, all these trials are preparations for a higher state of joy, by-and-by.

While we are waiting, *this posture becomes intense* till, with the Psalmist, we can say twice over, "I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait. My soul waits for the Lord." That is really three times over. We throw our very soul into it—"My soul does wait. My soul waits for the Lord." It is as if our whole being was craving after more of God! Notice how it is all summed up in the object for which we wait—"My soul waits for *the Lord*. I need HIM! My soul waits for the Lord; I need nothing else; I am not waiting for anything else." There is nothing else to wait for! As David said on another occasion, "Now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You." But oh, we are waiting intensely, insatiably, for God, the living God! When shall we come and appear before God? This, then, is the great longing and waiting of each one of the people of God. "I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait. My soul waits for the Lord."

II. I have scarcely a minute in which to speak about the second word, HOPING—"and in His Word do I hope."

Observe, first, that *hope is the reason for waiting*. "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for it? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Then, next, hope *is the strength of waiting*. You do not wait for a thing about which you are absolutely hopeless. If you have no hope of obtaining it, you say, "Then I will go my way. It is useless to wait any longer." But inasmuch as you have some degree of hope in waiting for God, your spirit is sustained so that you can still continue to wait for Him.

Further, *this hope is the sweetener of waiting*. Waiting is always sweet when there is a hope at the end of it. The trip may be very long, but you pursue your way with willing footsteps because you hope to reach the shelter at the end. But make sure that your hope is a good hope, that it is a well-founded hope, that it is a happy hope, that it is a hope that "makes not ashamed," that it is a hope that fixes itself on Christ, alone, for if you have not that hope, you will not wait. And if you do not wait, you will not receive. It is the waiting soul that gets the blessing! "It is good for me to draw near to God," said David. And he also said, "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." You cannot do this unless you have hope—therefore pray the Lord to give you a good hope, to brighten your hope and keep your eyes always looking for that which is yet to come, and which is laid up in the promise of God for all His people.

III. Then the third word is WATCHING. He that waits and he that hopes learns to watch. First, notice the figure used here, and then observe that the figure is exceeded—"My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning—yes, more than they who watch for the morning."

First, *what is the figure used here?* I should not wonder if it is partly the Temple. There was the great Temple at Jerusalem and all the people went up to it to worship so many times a year. I will suppose that God has given warm hearts to you and me—and that we desire to be at the ancient Temple. We have made our last march in the middle of the night. We have reached the bottom of the hill and climbed up its steep sides and we have reached the very gate of the Temple. When we get there, it is still night, so we ask one of the guards, "We have come to appear before God. When will the service begin?" He replies, "Not till the day breaks." "And what will happen when the day breaks?" "Why, then, they will offer the morning lamb and they will burn the incense. The priest will trim the lamps and the day's service will begin." We are lifting up our hearts to God—we have come up to the Temple on purpose to worship the Lord—we want to have a good long day of service, so we turn our eyes towards the hills over yonder and we watch. We say, "Watchman, what of the night? Is the morning coming? When will the blessed day begin? We are longing to enjoy all the ordinances of the Lord's House." So the watchers stand there and look out for the first tokens of daybreak on the Eastern hills.

Or, it may be that the figure is that of the guards upon the city walls. The sentinels have had to watch all night long. With steady and weary tramp, the watchman has gone from one tower to another, speaking to his brother sentinel as he has met him, keeping to his beat all through the dreary, cold, rainy, windy night. And he says to himself, "I wish it were morning." As he exchanges the watchword with his companion, he says, "I wish it were morning. My eyelids are heavy, my head begins to ache with this constant watching for the enemy. I wish it were morning." Have you never been in that posture, dear Friend? Have I? I hope I know what it is to watch for the morning—that I may meet with God in His holy Temple above and also to watch for the morning that this weary sentinel work may be done—and that I may be where there are no more enemies who can assault the sacred walls of Zion!

Then, again, some of you know what it is to watch for the morning in another sense. There is a dear one sick. How he tosses to and fro! He has a high fever and you constantly give him a cooling drink—and you take care at the proper hour to administer the medicine. But there is many a groan and many a weary cry. And you are all alone with the patient—everybody else in the house is sound asleep. Have you not sometimes gone to the venetian blind and turned it up just a little to see whether the sun has not risen? That clock's unwearied tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick—thousands of times—seems to go right into your brain and into your heart. And the poor sufferer says, "Would God it were morning!" You remember how, in the day, he said, "Would God it were

evening!" That is the way with the sick and, at last, you get as weary as your patient is. The fact is, you are half afraid you did fall asleep—you do not know what mischief may come if you do not watch—and you begin to say with the sufferer, "Would God it were morning!" Have you ever watched thus in a spiritual sense over a poor sin-sick soul? Have you ever watched thus over your own sick soul, until you have said, "I watch for the morning"? If so, this watching has been to you a picture and emblem of what your state of heart is in reference to your God. You are waiting and you are watching, and you cry, "When will the day break, and the shadows flee away?"

But, *the figure is exceeded by the fact,* for the text says, "My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning." We have been watching longer than they who guard the Temple or the city towers! The sentinel has only a few hours' night-watch, but some of us have been watching for these 30 years! Some of you for these 50 years! Ah, some of you for 60 years! I do not wonder that you have a stronger desire for the morning than they have who have only watched for one night.

Besides, you expect so much more than they do, for when the day comes, what does it bring to them? A little ease for the sentinel, a little rest for the nurse—but they will have to go back to the nursing or the watching as soon as the shades of night return. You and I are waiting for a daylight that will bring us endless rest and perfect joy! Well may we watch more than they who watch for the morning, for theirs is but the morning of a day, but ours is the morning of an eternity which shall know no end! They do but watch for the sun with its passing beams—we watch for the Sun of righteousness whose Glory makes Heaven itself! Well may we grow eager when we think of what is yet to be revealed in us. Well may our hunger increase as we think of the sweets that are reserved for us. You have heard of the Goths and Vandals? It is said that, somehow, they tasted of the grapes of Italy. I suppose that some bunches of fruit were carried across the Alps and when those poor Goths and Vandals tasted them, what did they say? "Let us go to the land where these clusters grow and eat them fresh from the vines." And it was not long before, in innumerable hordes, they swarmed over Italy! In a far higher sense, something like that has happened to us and, therefore, we sing—

"My soul has tasted of the grapes,
And now it longs to go
Where my dear Lord, His vineyard keeps,
And all the clusters grow."

We wait for Him "more than they who watch for the morning; I say, more than they who watch for the morning." Never did bride expect her marriage day as the true saint expects his Lord! Never did woman in travail long to behold her child as they who watch for their Lord and long for His appearing! Never did prisoner, pining in the dungeon till the rust ate into his soul, pine for liberty as saints pine for their Lord! This is the right posture for the whole Church—and for each individual Christian—waiting, hoping, watching till He appears who is their Husband, Savior,

Friend and All-in-All! God bless you, dear Friends, and keep you thus watching, for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 130.

I will first read the Psalm through and, afterwards, say a few words by way of exposition.

Verses 1-8. *Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If You Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning—yes, more than they who watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the LORD, for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* You notice that this is one of the Songs of Degrees, that is, Psalms ascending by steps, and it begins at the very bottom—"Out of the depths." But it gradually climbs up to the heights—"He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." May your experience and mine, Beloved, be like a ladder—upward, always upward, step by step, always rising and getting nearer to our God!

The Psalm begins very low—"Out of the depths." The Psalmist is in the depths of sorrow and conscious sin, the depths of weakness, the depths of doubt and fear. Yet, though he is in those depths, he does not leave off praying—"Out of the depths have I cried." Some of the best prayers that were ever prayed have been offered in the depths. There are some men who never prayed at all until they came into the depths of sorrow—and those sorrows pressed their prayers out of them.

The Psalmist's prayer was a cry. That is a child's prayer—it cries to its mother or its father—"Out of the depths have I cried." But it was not like a child's cries sometimes are—cries to itself, or cries to nobody—"Out of the depths have I cried unto YOU, O Jehovah." That is the right kind of prayer which is directed to God as an arrow is aimed at the target.

In looking back over his past experience, the Psalmist tells the Lord that he has prayed. Sometimes, it is a good thing to pray over your prayers. "I have prayed, Lord; now I present one more petition, 'I pray You to remember that I have prayed. I pray You to hear me. Lord, hear my voice.'" What is the good of prayer if God does not hear it? Sometimes we ask God to answer our supplication. That is right, but, at the same time, remember that it may be a greater blessing for God to *hear* our prayers than to answer them, for if He were to make it an absolute rule that He would grant all our requests, it might be a curse rather than a blessing! At any rate, I should feel it a very dreadful responsibility to have cast upon me, for then, after all, I should have to depend upon my own prayers and, therefore, have to order my own way. But when I read that God will hear my prayer, that is much better, for He can do as He likes about answering it. And if I pray an improper prayer, what is better

for me than for God to hear it and then to set it aside? And, often, mine are such poor feeble prayers that it is much better for me that He should hear them and then do for me exceeding abundantly above what I have asked or thought! I used to think that we ought to say that He is a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God, but I do not say that now. It is enough that He hears, enough that you have presented your petition and that God has heard it!

"Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications." That is, "Lord, consider my prayer; have respect unto it. Answer it according to Your wise consideration of it. 'Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.'" Our prayers must usually be supplications—that is the word for a beggar's pleading when he supplicates and asks for favors. That is what we do when we plead with God! And even if we do not speak, yet there is a voice in our supplications. In the sixth Psalm, David speaks of the voice of his weeping. And there is often a voice in that sorrow which cannot find a voice. God hears the grief that cannot itself speak to Him—"Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications."

And now, having put up his petition, notice his confession—"If You, Jehovah, should mark iniquities, O Adonai, who shall stand?" So it should run. If God were to sit like a Judge taking notes of the evidence and putting down, against His people, all their errors, who would be able to stand in that court? We would all be condemned! Then, does not God mark iniquities? Yes, He does in one sense, but not in another. And, through His infinite love and mercy, He does not deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities. "If He did," David seems to say, "I could not stand." But he says more, "Who shall stand?" Whatever pretensions to perfection any persons may make, they are false! There is no man who can stand in God's sight when He comes to mark our iniquities. And if we are taught of God's Spirit, we shall know it to be so! In fact, the more holy a man becomes, the more conscious he is of unholiness.

"But"—and what a blessed, "but," this is! One of the most blessed, "buts," in the Word of God! "But there is forgiveness with You." Or, "There is a propitiation with You." There is a readiness to deal with men, not according to their just deserts, but according to Free Grace and the infinite mercy of God. "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." Is not that a very strange expression? One would have thought that it would have said, "There is *judgment* with You, that You may be feared." But no, Brothers and Sisters, if there were judgment with God and no forgiveness, *then* men would grow despairing and they would be hardened and rebellious! Or else all would be swept away in God's wrath and there would be nobody left to fear Him. It is mercy that softens the heart, it is the forgiveness of God that leads men to love Him and to fear Him. The true fear of God—the holy *filial* fear—never rises out of judgment, but springs out of forgiving love. I hope, Beloved, you feel that because you are forgiven, you fear to offend God. Because of so much love, you fear to grieve the blessed Spirit of God.

"I wait for Jehovah, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope. My soul waits for Adonai"—the King, the Sovereign Lord—"more than they who watch for the morning, they who watch for the morning." Our translators put in the words, "I say more than"—I suppose, to make the sense more clear. But, by doing so, they spoiled the beautiful poetic simplicity of the original.

"Let Israel hope in the Lord." Until this verse, the Psalmist has been talking about himself. Now he speaks about all the people of God. True religion is expansive! As your own heart gets warmed, you begin to call others in to share your happiness. "Let Israel hope in the Lord." Did not their father Jacob do so? When all night he wrestled at the brook Jabbok, he hoped in the Lord, and so he gained his name, Israel, and went away triumphant because he hoped in Jehovah!

"For with Jehovah there is mercy." Believe that, O seeking sinner! "With Jehovah there is mercy." Believe this, O backslider! "With Jehovah there is mercy." Believe this, downcast child of God! "And with Him is plenteous redemption." There is enough for you and there is enough for all who come to Him! There is not a slave of sin whom God cannot redeem, for "with Him is plenteous redemption."

"And He shall redeem." There is the comfort of it—He not only has the redemption, but He will make use of it. "He shall redeem Israel"—the whole of His Israel, all His people—"He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." Oh, come to Him, then, with all your iniquities, and pray to be redeemed from them! And as surely as Jehovah lives, He will fulfill this promise and redeem you from all your iniquities!

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HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—113, 130.

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

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NO. 2580

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 24, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 29, 1883.

"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."
1 Corinthians 1:9.

PAUL is here arguing for the safety, the perseverance and the ultimate perfection of the saints to whom he is writing. He thanks God for what He has done for them and is assured that He will do yet more—that He will certainly confirm them unto the end—that they may be blameless in the day of Jesus Christ. The Apostle bases his argument upon this Truth of God—"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." And, Brothers and Sisters, this is good argument—to reason as to the future from the present and the past!

What God has done is a prophecy of what He will do, for God is unchangeable. He never takes up a purpose for a while and then drops it, but He carries it out to the end. He never speaks a word and then reverses it. "Has He said, and shall He not do it?" He never performs an action which is intended to produce a certain result without following it up until the result aimed at is fully accomplished. If you and I were dealing with a changeable God, it would indeed be bad for us, but He has said, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." Thus, from the Immutability of God, we argue that if He has begun to bless us, He will continue to bless us—and if He has commenced a work of Grace in our souls, He will certainly carry it on till it is absolutely complete!

We argue thus, partly from our own experience, because everything that is gracious within us has been, up to now, God's work. What have you and I done towards our own salvation? Put together all that we may even *think* we have done and what does it come to? "Without Me," said Christ to His disciples, "you can do nothing." And, truly, without Him we have done nothing. Therefore, all that has been done in us is to be ascribed to His working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. When the Lord has begun any work of Grace in us, do we not find that He has carried it on? Has He ever forsaken us? Has He, up to now, turned from His purpose? In the day of trouble, has He deserted us? When He has sent us upon a warfare, has He left us to fall through our own weakness? It has not been so, up to now, and we may sing, "His mercy endures for-

ever." He has been a faithful God until now and it is, therefore, right for us to conclude that He will always be the same—

"Determined to save, He watched over my path
When, Satan's blind slave, I sported with death.
And can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?

If He had meant to put us to shame, He has had ten thousand opportunities of doing so, but, until now, we have found the promise good—"Whoever believes in Him shall not be ashamed."

And, dear Friends, if you will think this matter over, the argument will seem to be still more clear. The Lord called us when we were quite undeserving of His Grace. I am sure that I can remember nothing, before my conversion, that could be used as a reason why I should have been called by the Grace of God any more than other lads of my own age. True, I did not go into any gross sin, but then I had so much light, and so much tenderness of conscience, and I lived in such a godly atmosphere in my home, that every sin I did commit was worse than the sins of those who never had such advantages. And I have often looked upon myself as having been, under certain aspects, the very chief of sinners. And every child of God, when he is in his right mind, will look upon himself in the same way—

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

Let us think of His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, and say, "If His love freely flowed to us when we were in *that* sad state, what is to hinder its continuing to flow to us? If the Lord loved us from no cause within ourselves, why should He not continue to love us?" And if it is said that we are now in an altered condition—and, blessed be God, it is so!—that very alteration is an argument that He will still love us. "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." He that brought us out of our horrible state and condemned by nature, without any reason in us for doing it, but simply because of His own sweet love—how could He cast us away? We are, at our worst, but what we were then, even if it were possible for us to be still dead—and should not He that began the work still carry it on, since He began with us on the footing and ground of Grace alone?

And think yet further, dear Friends, at that time we were not simply undeserving, but we were also unwilling! There is, in the natural heart of man, an unwillingness to yield unconditionally to God and Christ. The ways of Free Grace are not palatable to human pride! Even when we were religiously inclined, our religion consisted of our own prayers, our own repentance, or our own faith. You know how long we ran from one way to another, but it was always the same kind of way—we were to *do* something by which we were to get right with God, or to *feel* something, or to *know* something—everything was of self and for self! But the Grace of God, at last, weaned us from this folly and took us off the breasts of self-righteousness, which had always been empty. Then we were prepared to

go to God and, as one whom his mother comforts, so did He comfort us. We found, in our Father God and in His well-beloved Son, all that we needed, even wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption! Well, my Brothers and Sisters, if God brought us to Himself when we were stray sheep without any willingness to return, how much more will He continue to keep us, now that, at any rate, the will is present with us, though often how to perform that which is good we find not? He that loved the undeserving, He that loved the unwilling, will not forsake us now. "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

Imagine for a moment—it is only another form of the same argument—imagine what could be the motive of God for bringing us where we are if He meant, after all, to leave us. What shameful cruelty it would be for some prince or millionaire to take a poor man from his poverty and change his dress, alter his mode of living, put him among the princes, make him have luxurious tastes and elevated desires—and then send him back to the slum from where he came from and bid him live just as he formerly did in all his dirt and misery! Would not that be cruelty of the most refined kind? Surely, such treatment would cause the iron to enter into the man's soul, for he would say, "Why was I not left where I was? Why was I taught needs that I never had before? Why was I instructed in the use of luxuries which had never fallen to my lot before and which, therefore, I never missed? It would have been better for me never to have seen this pretended benefactor than that he should bring me back here and, after lifting me up so high, leave me to fall back to where I was before."

It cannot be that my Lord has made me sick of this world and yet will not give me another! It cannot be that He has torn away the righteousness which was some sort of comfort to me, tore it off like filthy rags, and made me stand naked to my own shame, if He does not intend to clothe me with the righteousness of Christ! He cannot have taught me to trust in His name, made me to rejoice in Him and given me sips of sweetness that have made me understand something of what Heaven must be, if He does not intend to bring me, at the end, to see His face! I cannot—I will not—believe that He has done all that He has done and yet that He will not complete the work! No, "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Because He has done that, He means to keep us there—He will preserve us even unto the end!

I fancy I hear someone say, "I do not quite see how that can be. To some extent our salvation must depend upon ourselves." Well, my Friend, if you think so, I will not quarrel with you. If you can get any sweetness out of that thought, it is such a dry old bone that I will willingly leave you to it. As for me, I should never be happy again if I thought that my eternal salvation hung upon myself, for that poor nail would soon come out of the wall! But I can hang my soul for time and for eternity on this Truth of God—"I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." I will not quarrel with you about this matter, for that which pleases you does not please me, so you may have your bone all to

yourself, and much good may it do you! I am prepared to hang all my hopes upon the finished work of Jesus Christ my Lord!

"But," asks one, "may you then do as you like?" My Friend, I wish I *might* do as I like, for if I could live as I liked, I would live entirely free from sin! I would live like Christ Himself! "Well," says one, "I do not understand it." The Lord teach you, then! I cannot. But if He ever brings you right away from all the bondage of the Law and the slavery of dependence upon yourself—to rest entirely upon His fixed, unchanging Grace—it will be a new era in your life! You will rise from being a slave to be a son! And from being under the lash of the bond slave, you will come to look up into your Father's face with unutterable joy, blessing and praising and magnifying His name as long as you live.

But that is not the subject upon which I especially wish to speak at this time. I want to talk about the great blessing which is the basis of our argument. What is it that God has done for His people? "By whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Why did not the Apostle simply say, "called into the fellowship of His Son," or, at most, "of His Son Jesus"? We would have known who was meant, would we not? Ah, but this enhances the glory of it—to make us see how great He is unto whose fellowship we have come and, consequently, how grand an exaltation it is which God has given to us, even us—the Apostle says that we have been called by God "into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

Among many things which the text teaches us—and I do not pretend to exhaust its meaning, but merely to give a hint or two concerning it—it means, first, that Believers are *called by God into the society of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.* And, secondly, *called into partnership with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*

I. First then, Beloved, all who truly believe are CALLED INTO THE SOCIETY OF JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

We enjoy that society *when we draw near to God in prayer* and, indeed, whenever we draw near to God at all! We dare not come to God without Jesus Christ—that dear name should begin and end all our prayers. He is the one Mediator between God and men. He is our Great High Priest and Intercessor. "No man comes unto the Father but by Me." "I am the door"—the way of access to God. He is the Mercy Seat, the Propitiatory where God meets with us and hears our prayers—so that we always pray in the society of Christ. There is no true praying without it.

And, next, *we always praise God in the society of Jesus Christ.* There is no hymn, or Psalm, or spiritual song that could be accepted of God unless our Lord Jesus Christ was with us when it was sung. Prayers and praises, alike, must ascend to God through the merit of His atoning Sacrifice.

More than this, we have been called into the society of Christ in this high sense—that we are always regarded by God as being with Christ and in Christ. *We stand before God in Christ.* I—I alone, dare not stand before God. No, my Brothers and Sisters, a sinner cannot stand there—he would be swept away! But Christ stands before God and we stand there in Christ, and so we are "accepted in the Beloved." That is a beauti-

ful picture which the poet puts into words when he prays that God will look through Christ's wounds, as through a window—

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

We are accepted before God, not as we are in ourselves, but as we are in Christ! In Christ's life made to live—in Christ's righteousness beautified—in Christ's blood cleansed—in Christ's perfection made perfect, for, "you are complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power." Is it not beautiful that we should thus be so associated with Christ that God always thinks of us in connection with His Son? God does not simply look at you and me, but at Christ covering you, me and all His people, and so His chosen ones are thought of as being in Him, their Covenant and Federal Head. They are so completely in Him that He, as it were, robes them before God. This is being brought into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, standing before God in Christ.

But there is more than that in this expression. We are brought, Beloved, not only to have Christ with us in our approaches to God and to stand before God in Christ, but also to be *in Christ by virtue of a living union with Him.* The Spirit of God quickens our spirit and gives us life, but, more than that, Christ says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." The life of the Believer is not in himself, but in his Lord. "He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life." "I live," says the Apostle Paul, "yet not I, but Christ lives in me." And, writing to the Colossians, he says, "For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Just as this finger of mine lives because of its union with the head, and with the heart, and with the rest of my being where life is to be found, so do you and I live because we have been joined unto Christ! If there were no life in the stem, there would be no life in the branch. If the branch is severed from the vine, it has no life in itself and you and I, dear Friends, are living branches because Christ lives and we live in Him and His life flows into us. Is not this a very wonderful thing?

Do you see that man who once was in the habit of going in and out of the tavern? His speech, in those evil days, was foul, filthy, abominable. His poor wife was bruised and battered by his cruelty. His children were starved and shoeless. He is now with us in this House of Prayer and he is a member of Christ's mystical body! If I were to ask him to stand up and tell us about the great change that has been worked in him, we would all rejoice to hear him testify that the Lord has forgiven him, washed him, cleansed him and renewed his heart! Did that man, in his unregenerate state, ever think that the life of Christ would be in him quickening his mortal body and changing his whole nature? Such a thought never occurred to him! Is he not a wonder of Grace? Why, I do verily believe that if the devil were to be converted and become a holy angel, again, it would not be more amazing than the conversion of some who are now present! The Lord has done strange things, marvelous things for them, and our hearts are glad as we think of what He has done. With His mighty arm, He reaches even to the ends of the earth those who have gone far in sin—and He brings them to His heart, to His House, to His Throne and into

fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Oh, the wonders of God's Grace! Let us bless and praise Him now and forever!

Then, dear Friends, there is also this wonderful fact, that we are so called into the society of Christ that if we live as we ought to live, *the Lord Jesus Christ is the most familiar acquaintance we have in all the world.* The most loving husband often has to go out to business during the day and he can only get back to his spouse in the evening. But the Bridegroom of our souls is with us all day long! Whether we are at home or out in the world, He is still with us. You have a dear friend, somewhere, and you love to be in his company. But you cannot always be with him, so you sometimes have the sorrow of parting with him. But your best Friend is never far away from you, day or night. "When I wake," says David, "I am still with You." Perhaps, one of these days, we may have to go out to the utmost ends of the earth, but our Friend will be with us in the vessel as we cross the sea. He will be with us when we land on the distant shore. He will be with us everywhere and at all times. He is the "Friend that sticks closer than a brother," whose company need never be lost. He never gets tired of His beloved ones! His delights are with the sons of men. If we would but walk by faith and carefully observe His Laws, we would find Him abiding with us and we would be abiding with Him. Spoke I not truly when I said that to His people, He is the most familiar Friend that they have? He dwells in them and they dwell in Him. "I in them, and You in Me," said Christ to His Father—a wonderful union! And our union with Christ ought to be, in its enjoyment, as perpetual as Christ's union with the Father, for He speaks of it in the same terms! "I in them, and You in Me." Yes, Beloved, we are, indeed, brought into fellowship with Jesus Christ our Lord, seeing that we are permitted to have Him for our constant Companion and Friend!

And now, we are so called into the society of Christ that if we are living as we ought to live, where we go, Christ goes. *We are to represent Christ among men.* Most of them do not know much about Christ, but what they do know of Him, they will very largely learn from us. I am grieved to say that Christ has sometimes had a bad name because of the conduct of those who have professed to be His friends. "Ah," men say, "so this is your Christianity, is it?" But the man who really is in the society of Christ lives in such a way that men take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus and has learned of Him. We are Christ's representatives in the world and He trusts His honor and His cause in our hands. We are so much in His society that we compromise His dignity if we do wrong—but we adorn His Doctrine in all things if, by His Grace, we are enabled to do what is right. May you and I know to the fullest what it is to be in the society of Christ and walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called!

II. Now I want to turn to my second point, which is this—WE ARE CALLED INTO PARTNERSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

I do not know when I have felt so utterly unable to speak my thoughts as now that I have reached this part of my subject. If I could only make you enjoy a hundredth part of what I have enjoyed in looking into this subject, I would be perfectly satisfied! But I am afraid that I cannot.

However, I will tell you as well as I can how thoroughly and how perfectly every true Christian is brought into partnership with Christ.

For, first, *the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has given to every true Believer all that He possesses.* That is a splendid partnership when He, who is Lord of All, unto whom the Father has committed all power in Heaven and on earth, has been pleased to give over to His poor partners full right and title to all that He has! If we are heirs of God, we are joint-heirs with Jesus Christ—Christ is heir to nothing to which His people are not also heirs.

He has given us His life. That is a wonderful partnership of which He says, "Because I live, you shall also live." He actually laid down His life for us! "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." His very Self, His life, He brought into the partnership—it was the biggest asset in the whole concern, the costliest thing that could be contributed to this wonderful joint-stock company—Christ & Co. We without Christ would be poor worthless things, but Christ is ours, and Christ is All, so we have all. Oh, what a wonderful partnership is this in which He gave us His life!

He has also given us His Father. Hear His message to His disciples after His resurrection—"I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." Christ has not a Father if I have not one! Christ has not a God if I have not one, for He says, "My Father, and your Father; My God, and your God." Oh, but what a wonderful Father Christ has! The Only-Begotten, who has always perfectly kept His Father's Commandments, who is eternally and essentially One with Him—what a Father He has! That Father is the Father of all the saints. What a God Christ has! Who can imagine the wealth of the Godhead? But all that Godhead's fullness and Glory belong to every soul that is in Christ! God has given Himself to Christ, that all fullness might dwell in Him. "And of His fullness have we all received, and Grace for Grace." So, He has given us His life and He has given us His Father.

Notice, next, He has given us His Kingdom. This makes me almost stagger as I say it, yet here are His own words to His disciples, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed unto Me" If Christ is King, you are kings! If He reigns, you must reign, too! When men crown the king, they also crown the queen—and if she is crowned, she is queen. And when Christ is King, His Church is queen and she shall reign with Him forever and ever. Oh, that the great marriage-day were come and that the bride had made herself ready to glory and rejoice with her adorable Bridegroom!

Notice, too, that Christ has given us His Throne. "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." It is the Throne of God and Christ occupies it with His Father, but not alone, for He shares it with all His people! What a wonderful partnership is this! Christ gives us His life, His Father, His Kingdom and His Throne, as part and parcel of the joint-stock company He shares with us. This is one meaning of our being brought into fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is something more which is quite as amazing, namely, that, *inasmuch as Christ gave us His all, He took* our all. "Of course He did,"

you say. Ah, but what had we to bring into the partnership? All that we had to bring were rags, beggary, poverty, sins, curses, death, Hell—that was all we could contribute to the joint-stock.

Yet Christ was willing to become a partner with us, for, first, He took our nature. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also, Himself, likewise took part of the same." He would not let His chosen ones be men without Himself being a Man, too! And if they were to be compassed with infirmities, He must be compassed with infirmities, too! And if they had to suffer hunger, cold and nakedness, He would suffer them, too, so that He could say, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." This all came because He took upon Himself our nature.

Then, still more wonderful, He took upon Himself our sin. Though in Him was no sin, yet the Lord made to meet upon Him the iniquity of us all. He was the Scapegoat upon whose head the sin of Israel was, by imputation, laid, and He carried our sin away into the wilderness where it could never be found. He willingly bore all the consequences of our sin and, therefore, He became a partaker of our curse. It does seem amazing that the Son of God should be, in any sense, cursed, yet so it was. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree." And He did hang on the tree and bleed and die for us.

Among other things which Christ took on our behalf, it always astounds me that He endured even a sense of His Father's deserting Him till He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" God must turn away His eyes from sinners—and if Christ occupies the place of sinners, the Father leaves Him to die in the dark! Is not this an amazing partnership, that Christ should take upon Himself all that appertained to us, even to sorrow and broken-heartedness and, at last, death itself? That blessed body, though it saw no corruption, yet was as truly dead as that of anyone else who ever died! Christ took everything that belonged to us into that wonderful partnership!

Now see the result of this union—*thus Christ meets all our needs.* For instance, I bring my sin, but against that He sets His Atonement. I bring my bondage, but against that He sets His Redemption. I bring Him death, but He brings His Resurrection. I bring Him my weakness and He meets it with His strength. I bring Him my wickedness and He is made of God unto me, righteousness. I bring Him my evil nature and He is made of God unto me, sanctification. Whatever there is of evil that I have to contribute to the partnership, He covers it all with a splendor of goodness that blots it out and makes my soul much richer than it was before. Oh, what a wonderful thing it is to be brought into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, if it is thus with us, *we must make this fellowship real on our part.* We must yield to Christ all that we have if we are brought into this partnership with Him. What little we have, we must bring. He has already taken all the bad we have, and if we have any good thing, He has *given* it to us, so let us bring it all to Him. I have a something inside here for which He has done much by His Grace—something

which was black as night, but which He has washed and changed. Here it is, my Lord—my heart. You say, "My son, give Me your heart." I do deposit it with You, with all the love, all the ardor and all the zeal that I have, and place it entirely at Your disposal. Seal my heart against all intruders, that it may be wholly for Yourself. Will not you, also, my Brothers and Sisters, bring your hearts to Him who loved you and gave Himself for you?

Well, what else do you have? Have you a tongue? Then give your tongue to Him and speak for Him as best you can. But perhaps you cannot say much. Have you a purse? Then give it to Him—all the substance that you have—use as His steward, for His Glory. Have you time? Spend some of that in caring for one of Christ's friends—I mean, yourself! And in caring for others of His friends—your wife, your children, your neighbors—for He bids you do that for Him. All the rest of your time is His—therefore waste none of it, but give it all to Him. It is only a few farthings you can ever put into the treasury by the side of His great masses of gold bullion, but do put in what you have, and feel a pleasure in saying, "Yes, I have contributed something to the partnership, little as it is." Have you any sort of ability? Have you prayers? Have you tears? Come, put them all in! Are you so poor and so obscure that this is all you have to bring? Then be much in prayer, for my Lord will accept your cries, tears, sighs and groans—and they shall all go into the joint-stock account, for He is so condescending that when He takes us into fellowship, He is willing to take our little share and put it with His!

But, next, if we are partners with Christ, *we must share with Him in all that He has.* Are you willing? "Oh, yes," you say. Ah, but there is something which Christ carries which is ugly to some eyes and heavy to some shoulders. I mean, His Cross. And, you know, His Cross goes with His crown—there is no dividing them. As we say in the old proverb, "No sweat, no sweet," so, depend upon it, it is, "No cross, no crown." You were laughed at, yesterday, were you not, for Christ's sake? Brother, Sister, did you stick to your partnership? Did you say, "Thank you. I am glad to receive a share of what the world gives my Lord. I am thankful that I am counted worthy to share with Him even in that"? If you are reproached for Christ's sake, you should be happy! In that way you are proving the reality of your partnership. It must have been a glorious thing to the martyrs that they had the high privilege of dying for their Lord. He sustained and cheered them, but the grand thought that made them patient in the midst of agony—and triumphant in the hour of cruel death—was that they could say, "Now we are partakers of His sufferings! We are filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for His body's sake, which is the Church." They were such thorough partners with Christ that they took all that came—and if we go in to be partners, we must be partners. We must take the rough as well as the smooth.

If you marry a wife, it must be for better or worse. And if you enter into fellowship with Christ, there can be no "worse" to those who are one with Him! But if it *seems* to be worse, you must cleave to Him all the more closely! There is no true fellowship with Christ if we are not willing to go with Him wherever He goes—into any measure of shame, or scorn,

or loss, or suffering, or even to death by martyrdom, itself, for His dear sake.

I told you that in this partnership, the Lord Jesus Christ supplies our needs. When we put the need down, He puts the supply down. Now, I want you who have been called into this fellowship to do the same with Christ, for *we are to supply His need.* What does He need? Well, He has gone away to Heaven. He is not here in bodily Presence, so Christ needs a voice with which to go and call in the other sheep that are not yet folded. Christ needs a voice in your house to speak to the children about their souls! Will you lend Christ your voice? There is somebody—a neighbor of yours—who never goes to any place of worship and Christ wants a voice to speak to that Sabbath-breaker. Will you lend Christ your voice? Perhaps, in the pew with you, there is somebody who only needs just a word and he or she would be decided for Christ. Will you lend—no, it is not a case of *lending*—will you *give* Christ your voice? Our tongues should be so consecrated to Christ that they are wholly His.

There is a story which will be in the Magazine next month [*The Sword and the Trowel*, April, 1883—Visit http://www.pilgrimpublications.com/swtrowel.htm for copy availability] which you will read, I daresay, with pleasure. I was delighted with it when I read it. It was to the effect that some people's blunders seem to be more in the line of doing good than are other people's best efforts. A young girl, belonging to the Normal College in New York, went home and said, "Oh, Father, young Mr. Spurgeon, Mr. Spurgeon's son, addressed us today, and instead of trying to make us laugh, as most visitors do, or to give us the 'good advice' that we have heard a hundred times, he gave us something new! He spoke about Jesus and he invited us all to Christ, and did it so naturally, and simply, and affectionately, that all the girls seemed interested. Oh, how much good it did me, Father! I wish you had been there to hear him."

Now, mark you, it was a great blunder on "Son Charlie's" part, because that Normal College is not only a non-sectarian institution, but many of the girls are daughters of Jews and infidels. And, according to the rules, he had no business to say anything about religion at all! And he blundered by firing the Gospel gun right into the middle of them. I rejoiced when I heard of it and I wish that you and I would always make such blunders as that, so that, if people got us to speak to them—somehow or other we will tell them of Jesus Christ because we cannot help it! What a man is full of, will come out of him. And if a man is full of Christ, he may make grand mistakes—but they will be to the glory of God! So I do not say, *lend* Christ your tongues, but *give* Him your voices which belong to Him.

Many of you, I trust, will be ready enough to give Him your tongues, but does He not want anything else? Yes. Christ wants our personal service. He wants men and women who will be, among men, what He would be if He were here in bodily Presence. He wants some of you to take little children like lambs to His fold and teach them on the Sabbath. The Sunday schools need you. No, rather let me say that Christ needs you in the Sunday school. He needs men and women to live in the midst of this

great London as He would have lived if He were multiplied ten thousand times and dwelt among our citizens.

Sometimes, Jesus needs you to act as a foot-washer, to wash His feet. If you see a Brother going wrong, backsliding, and getting his feet dirty, your Lord does not want you to go and call out so that everybody can hear you, "Here is a Brother who has dirty feet." No, no! Go and fetch a basin of water and a towel, and wash the man all by himself, and set your fallen Brother right again. Then Christ has some very poor members of His family, perhaps in the workhouse—and He wants you to go and relieve them. There are some who are sick. He wants you to visit them. There are some of His loved ones, it may be, who are cast down and ready to sink in utter despair—He wants you to go and comfort them. Since it is a joint-stock concern in which you are a partner, look out for Christ's poor people, and say to yourself, "If I cannot give anything to Him, I will give it to them, for they are a part of Him and He will accept it as given to Himself." God help you to do so—you who love His dear name—and thus may we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, to whom, with the ever-blessed Spirit, be glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-9.

Verse 1. *Paul, called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother.* Paul could never have sustained the great weight of responsibility and tribulation which fell upon him if he had not felt that he was "called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God." No man will ever be fit for the ministry of the Word unless he is called to it by God. This also will be your strength in every other station of life—if God has called you to your peculiar work and warfare, He will not send you at your own charges, but He will be at the back of you and support you even to the end. I think it is for this reason that Paul so constantly dwells upon his own calling when he is about to write to the Churches—that he may remind other Believers that they have similar privileges in their spheres of labor.

2, 3. *Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* A Church should be made up of sanctified persons, those who have been set apart in Christ from before the foundation of the world, those who have been called by the Spirit of God to holiness of life. We sometimes sing—

"With them numbered may we be
Now, and through eternity"—

but if we are not holy, if we are not truly sanctified, how can we expect to be numbered with the Church of Christ? Where there is no true holiness, there is no work of the Spirit of God. For all the holy ones Paul desires Grace and peace, for they still need these blessings. The holiest of men

still have spots about them and they need that Grace and peace should be given to them from day to day through Jesus Christ our Lord.

4. *I thank my God always on your behalf, for the Grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.* It is something to be thankful for God's goodness to yourself, but it is a higher virtue to be thankful for God's goodness to others. How grateful we might be all day long if we had quick eyes to see the Grace of God in our fellow Christians—and if we blessed God for it whenever we saw it! There are some whose eyes are much more quick to see imperfections than to see Graces—it is a pity to have such jaundiced eyes as that—may we have good, sound, clear, gracious eyes which will see all the good there is in our fellow Believers. And may we then ascribe it all to God and bless and praise Him for it!

5-8. *That in everything you are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that you come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.* It was very wise of Paul to thus praise these Corinthians where they could be praised, for he was about to upbraid them and reprove them for many things which were not pleasing to God. If you have the unpleasant duty of rebuking those who deserve it, always take care that you begin by saying all that you can and all that ought to be said in their favor—it will prepare the way for what you have to say to them afterwards. The Corinthians were a highly-gifted Church. They probably had more knowledge and more of the gifts of utterance than any other Church of their day. But, alas, they fell into greater sin than did their sister Churches! Great gifts are not great Graces, but great gifts *require* great Graces to go with them, or they become a temptation and a snare. Yet Paul felt quite sure that God would keep even these Corinthians with all their imperfections—and confirm them to the end. And that which was true of them is also true of all the Lord's people—God will preserve them to the very end.

9. *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, IN THE YEAR 1856.

"Perfect in Christ Jesus."
Colossians 1:28.

Perfection in Jesus Christ! What effect ought it to have upon our hearts if it really is ours? Perfection! What do we know of it from Scripture? We know that it is a word so large that while it takes us little time to say it, yet it comprehends all words within its meaning. There is no good word of any description which can be applied to any creature but this word, *perfection*, takes it in. And though it is easy to utter it with our lips, I question whether there is any mortal mind capable of grasping the idea of perfection any more than it can grasp the idea of eternity! When we begin to think of eternity—without beginning, without end—we are lost in trying to comprehend it because we are finite. And when we once endeavor to conceive perfection—without fault, without flaw—we are lost because we are imperfect! And therefore we cannot understand perfection any more than the finite can grasp the infinite! Perfection, indeed, seems to be the sole prerogative of God. He is perfect in everything. In all His attributes there is no lack. From whatever point of view we regard Him, He is without blot or blemish. And no man, speaking truthfully of God, can say that there is anything of imperfection in Him. If we speak of majesty, His Glory is unsurpassed. If we talk of power, His is Omnipotence and that, indeed, is infinite power! If we speak of wisdom, His is the wisdom of the Godhead—He knows all things, from the most minute to the most immense. He comprehends all secrets and grasps all knowledge in His mighty mind.

It does seem, at first sight, as if perfection could belong only to the Creator. But we remember that the works of God are also perfect and so are all His ways. When He made the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, He looked upon them and said, "They are very good." Written on the face of Nature, there was then this one word, Perfection! All God's works were perfect, without a flaw—the great Artificer completed all His workmanship and left nothing undone. There was no rough and crude matter which He had not formed—there was no substance He touched which He did not turn into the gold of perfectness. All things were good, yes, very good—all were perfect!

There is one thing on earth, even now, which is perfect. Albeit that perfection was blasted by the Fall and ever since the Garden of Eden was

devastated by the sin of man, perfection has gone, yet there is one thing on earth which we possess which is perfect. You all know what that is—it is the perfect will of God contained in the Sacred Scriptures. He who would be able to spell perfection in mortal language must read the Bible through, for he will find it perfect in all its parts—perfectly true, perfectly free from all error, perfect in everything that is necessary for man to know, perfect in all that can guide us to bliss, perfect in all that can warn us of dangers on the road. There is still something of perfection left here, but when we come to look *within*, where is perfection then, Beloved?

I shall not stop to prove the depravity of mankind, I will not talk much about the fall of Adam, how it injured us and destroyed the perfection of our nature, but I would ask this simple question of you—Do you not feel in your own souls that perfection is not in you? Does not every day teach you that? And though there are times when you are striving to be like Christ and seeking to serve Him, yet in the very striving and seeking you forget that you must live wholly on Christ, that you must trust Him as well in your duties to sanctify them as in your sins to forgive them! And then you begin to set up a perfection of your own, although you have so often had a view of your own heart that you ought not, for a moment, dream of any perfection there! Without making it a doctrine, I simply state it as a fact which you will not deny—that in you, that is, in your flesh—there is not only imperfection—but there dwells no good thing. Honestly, from the depths of your soul, you must confess that whether Adam lost perfection or not, whether you ever had perfection when you were born or not—it is not to be found in you—not in your conduct, conversation, or life! You only wish it were there. Daily experience makes you bemoan the lack of it. Every tear that trickles from your eyes say, "Imperfection." Every sigh which comes from your heart says, "Imperfection." Every harsh word which proceeds from your lips says, "Imperfection." And every duty which is not done with the most holy, strict and rigid observance of God's Law cries out, "Imperfection!" You sit down, like the captive daughter of Zion, and confess that the crown of perfection is gone from your head and departed from your heart. Guilty you must lie before God, for perfection is not in you.

But, then, while speaking of the Doctrine of Perfection, we must remember that, according to the sacred oracles, perfection is absolutely necessary for all who hope to enter Heaven! We may have lost perfection, but that does not alter God's demand for it. It may be impossible that we should ever be perfect in ourselves, but God demands that we should be perfect. The holy Law was given by God and if we wish to be saved by it, we must keep it perfectly—no man who is not perfect can ever hope to enter Heaven! Unless he can find perfection somewhere—in another, if not in himself—He must be irretrievably ruined and driven from God's Presence. No man under the sun can ever walk the starry plains of Heaven, or tread the golden streets of bliss until he gets perfection somehow or other! Let me tell you why.

First of all, it would be unjust of God if He did not punish man if he is not perfect. God required of all men, originally, that they should keep His

entire Law. Now, if a man is not perfect, it stands to reason that he must have broken God's Law, otherwise he would be perfect. Having broken it, God has said, "I will punish sin. 'The soul that sins, it shall die.'" And—with reverence to the Most High God, we say it—if He does not punish every sin, He is not a just God. If He does not exact the punishment for every transgression, there is a blot upon His escutcheon—the whiteness of His Throne is tinged with stains and He is no longer that awfully, severely just God we have considered Him to be! I tell you, Man, the very Nature of God demands that you should be punished if you are not perfect! If but one sin has been committed by you, you have broken the tablets of God's Commandments and you are guilty of breaking them all! Ah, but it is not merely one sin that you have committed, but ten thousand times ten thousand! You are far from perfection and unless you can get perfection somewhere—in Christ, or in yourself—you are lost beyond all hope of remedy, for perfection God must have, as a just God, or else He must punish you for your sin!

Moreover, remember that we must be perfect or else we shall never be fit companions for those who are perfect in spirit and stand before the Throne of God. Are not the angels perfect? Has sin ever stained their purity? Once, it is true, "There was war in Heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in Heaven." But now the spirits before God's Throne are spotless and pure even as God is. Has God any stain on Him? Will any dare to say there is imperfection in Him? No, God and the angels are perfect—and would men be fit companions for angels and God if they had imperfections? If men should have sin when they come to die, would they be fit to live with those spirits who know no sin and in whose breasts there has been no guile? Could I hold acquaintance and familiar converse with the man whose lips are always guilty of profane swearing? Could I live in peace with the man whose character is not akin to my own conduct? And, surely, there is not so much difference between me and my fellow creatures, here, as between the sinner and his God. No, my Friend, unless you get perfection somewhere—in Christ, or somewhere else—you cannot go to Heaven! You must have perfection, for God has declared that nothing that defiles shall in any way enter the gates of Paradise—

"Those holy gates forever bar
Pollution, sin and shame."

None but those washed whiter than snow and as pure as the Almighty can hope to be companions of the Deity and co-heirs with the celestial spirits. You must have perfection if you would enter Heaven—this is evident not only from the Nature of God, but from the holiness of Heaven itself! Otherwise you would be unfit to enter and you would not be happy if you were there.

"Where, then, is perfection to be found?" cries the poor sinner. We find a multitude of persons ready to tell us, "Here is perfection," or, "There is perfection." *The ceremonialist* says, "I will give you perfection! Here it is—you shall, in your infancy, have sacred drops fall upon your forehead and hallowed words shall be pronounced over you—and you shall be regener-

ated! In your later years, you shall kneel before the sacred table and the bishop's hands shall be solemnly laid upon your head, and you shall take the sacramental bread and wine. And when you come to die, the priest shall sit by your side and he shall give you, in your last expiring moment, some drops of goodly cheer called wine, and a piece of bread, and these shall be your passport to Heaven—and so you shall be perfect!" Ah, poor ceremonialist, you will find yourself mightily mistaken and much deceived! Like a dream when one awakes, God will scatter all the baseless fabric of your hands—all that you have done and all those pretty garments you have woven shall be torn sunder and cast into the fire—and you shall stand naked before Him!

Then comes *the speculative perfectionist.* He tells you that you must believe in Jesus Christ and then, by a rigid system of devotion and constantly observing religious duties, you will attain to three or four stages. You will get, in the first place, to justification, then to sanctification and go on, by degree, until you will be perfectly sanctified and come to the highest degree men can have in the body. I have met with some of these "perfectly sanctified" gentlemen, but I could have spoiled their perfection simply by treading on their corns—and I believe I have done so, for they have seemed to be immensely cross when I have denied their proud boast! I have heard of a particularly perfect man who came to John Betridge one morning. The quaint and honest minister treated him very rudely, whereupon the man turned round at once and began to speak all manner of evil words. John said to him, "Pretty perfection was yours, that I could spoil in so easy a manner!" You will always find those so-called "perfection" gentlemen far from perfect. I would not trust the man who called himself, "perfect," in anything whatever, for he that says he has no sin is a liar, and the Truth of God is not in him. He that says he is perfect, mistakes God's Word and knows not himself.

Where, then, is perfection to be found? The text tells us that all Christians are perfect in Christ Jesus, that the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty are perfect in Christ Jesus. Let me try to explain the meaning of this perfection in Christ.

I. First, consider HOW GOD'S PEOPLE ARE "IN CHRIST."

I remark, first, *they are, all of them, in Christ in the Covenant of Election.* When God chose His people, He did not choose them one by one, separately, but He chose Christ and all His people were chosen in Him. Just as when I select an acorn, I select all the unborn forests slumbering in that acorn cup, so, when God chose Jesus, He chose all the people that were in Him, all whom Christ had taken to Himself by an eternal union and had made one with His own Person.

Secondly, *the chosen ones are also all in Christ by redemption.* When Jesus died, each one of us who believe in Jesus died in Him. And when He suffered, we suffered in Christ. Our sins were laid on Christ's head and now, Christ's merits are laid on us. Christ made an atonement for the sins of all His elect through the shedding of His blood upon the Cross. We were in Him when He died. We were in Him when they laid Him in the grave. We were in Him when He rose and led captivity captive. And we are in Him now!

Thirdly, *we are in the Lord Jesus Christ actually, positively and, to our own knowledge, when we believe in Him.* It is then, when faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, that we become *consciously* in Christ! We were in Christ before, but we did not know it. We were made secure in Jesus from before the foundation of the world, but we did not know it—we had no evidence of it whatever. We were like a man who is underage—the possessions of his father, or those which have been left to him when he turns twenty-one, are positively his, but he cannot touch them until he comes of age. So, all the possessions of the Covenant belong to the elect even before they believe, but they cannot touch them until the appointed time comes when, by Sovereign Grace, they believe. A man who has not attained his majority cannot get much comfort from what he is to have when he comes to full age. He cannot live on it. He cannot be supported by it. So, the Christian cannot feed on what he has not received. When we have faith, then we come into our inheritance! The moment we believe, we have attained full age—we are no longer under tutors, governors and schoolmasters, but we are brought to Christ—we are of perfect age and then we are said to be "in Christ." The moment a sinner believes, then he is "in Christ" and no man whatever has any right to make any pretense that he is in Christ until he believes—until he has surrendered himself to Christ, until he has given himself to Jesus to be saved by Him—to serve Him, to live for Him and, at last, to die in Him and live with Him forever!

II. The doctrine of our text is THAT EVERY MAN WHO IS "IN CHRIST" IS PERFECT.

Does not this startle us? The majesty of our text demands someone who could discourse with eloquence. Yes, it needs an angel to proclaim its glorious meaning! Believers are, in Christ, perfect—every one of them! He is a new-born child of God! It may be only ten minutes since he put his faith in Jesus Christ. Before that time he had been a drunk, a swearer, a blasphemer. But yet I tell you, if that man has really believed and is in Christ, he is perfect in Christ! There is another man who has been a backslider. Once he walked in God's ways, but he has been suffered to wander from the faith. Now God is bringing him back. He is laying hold on him and the man is weeping, repenting and crying out! His bones are broken through the fall, his soul is sore and sick, even unto death! Look at him as he stands with tears of penitence coursing down his cheeks! I tell you, that man, backslider though he may have been—though he has sinned even as David did—is perfect in the Person of Christ!

There is another, a gray-headed old man. Long has he fought his Master's battles—he has received many a wound and scar—and the troubles and trials of this mortal life have greatly weakened him. If you ask him whether he is perfect, he tells you, "No, from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, by nature I feel diseased. In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing." He disclaims all righteousness of his own, all trust in himself, all hope out of Christ. I tell you, that old man is perfect in Christ! I care not what may be his frailties, what may be his weaknesses—he is perfect in Christ! And then, O Christian, what though your

sins are many, what though infirmities beset you, though you have a hasty temper and, perhaps, the lusts of the flesh sometimes rise—and only preventing Grace saves you from going astray—what though evil thoughts cross your mind and today you are bemoaning your sad case and crying out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—I tell you, Christian, you are complete in Him, you are perfect in Christ Jesus! Having been washed in His blood, clothed with His righteousness, united to His Person, you are, this moment, perfect in Him!

There is one passage in Solomon's Song which once flashed in my mind with great brilliancy when I was reading that blessed Canticle. It says, "You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you." That is Jesus Christ talking to His Church. She says, "I am black, because the sun has looked upon me." She acknowledges her own imperfections and her lack of beauty, but Jesus Christ says, "You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you." Looking at His Church from the crown of her head to the sole of her feet, He sees not a blemish because she is in Him! She does not stand in herself. Her divisions and the sins of her members and of her ministers are sore blemishes if you look at her with the eye of the world, or with the eyes of Christians—but if you look at her in Christ, all her blemishes are gone—she is covered with a robe that makes her shine like a queen! Though her old garments may have been those of beggary and ruin, she now has the garments of majesty and light. "You are complete in Him," yes, you are "perfect in Christ Jesus."

I think it would be very hard to make some who are the Lord's people believe this. Some of you are drudging on in bondage because you do not completely understand Justification by Faith. And I believe that the great fault of the ministry of our day is that complete justification in the Person of Jesus Christ is not preached in all its length and breadth. Because there are some ministers who, while preaching it, say things which have a tendency to lead men to licentiousness, therefore we are forbidden to say anything at all about it. But, Beloved, I am sure that all I can say to you about our perfection in Christ will never lead a Christian to licentiousness, for, because he is "perfect in Christ," he will long to be more like Christ! And he will seek more and more, day by day, to have the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit exerted upon him to keep him from sin.

Many go to Arminians and semi-Calvinists to hear this, that and the other. They have all kinds of divinity conglomerated into one—little bits of Pelagianism tacked on to small scraps of Arminianism, these hooked on to Calvinism and that, again, joined to Socinianism—all sorts of strange combinations mixed up into one curious medley for them to drink! Whereas they need, instead of that, the pure unadulterated milk of God's Word in the shape of the doctrinal preaching of Justification by Faith!

How are we justified? That is the question for us to answer. Are we justified by works, or by Grace? Every true Christian says, "We are justified by faith. By Grace are we saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." Well then, if we are saved by faith in Christ,

can we be said to be saved by works? If I had no good works at this moment, and if I have faith, am I not as completely justified as though I had ten thousand good works? I know, if I am justified by faith, good works will always follow, but good works will never *merit* justification. They are the handmaidens, not the mistress! Faith in Christ is the foundation, the cornerstone and top stone of justification. Good works are *evidences* of justification—they have nothing to do with procuring it. The poor thief who died, having been hardly able to *do* a good work, went to Heaven just as surely as the man shall who lives 80 years in the service of his Master! It is not anything in *myself* that saves me—it is Christ alone. If I feel myself the most loathsome of all creatures, even though I hate and abhor myself, yet if I know I have faith in Christ—if I have cast myself on His atoning Sacrifice, He has not altered though I have—He is as perfect as ever, in Him there is no sin! And therefore I, standing in HIM, am perfect this moment notwithstanding all my corruptions and frailties!

III. Now I come very briefly to consider THE INFLUENCE OF THIS DOCTRINE of Perfection in Christ when it is realized in the heart.

I know that at the outset, some will say that this doctrine, stated so broadly, must necessarily lead persons to imagine that good works are of little service. I ask them, if they ever read any of Luther's writings, whether they have noticed how broadly he speaks concerning good works and the righteousness of the flesh? If they have read his writings, they will find that, as a Protestant and a follower of Luther, I have not overstepped the mark. And if they will turn to the Epistle to the Romans they will see how Paul declares, "And if by Grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise Grace is no more Grace. But if it is of works, then it is no more Grace: otherwise work is no more work." If they will read the other Epistles, they will see that I might have said even more upon this theme. I deny that this doctrine has any tendency to lead men to sin. I can speak for myself, so far as my own life is concerned, I always find myself most holy when I know myself to be most unholy. I can live most *like* Jesus when I live most *on* Jesus and most out of myself. When I say, "I must live on Christ alone, I must rest solely on Him for salvation and believe that, however unworthy, I am saved in Jesus," then there rises up, as a motive for gratitude, this thought, "Will I not live wholly to Christ? Will I not love Him and serve Him, seeing that I am saved by His merits?" That is the strongest tie to virtue and the greatest bond to a holy life.

Then let me tell you the next effect of this doctrine. *It gives a Christian the greatest calm, quiet, ease and peace.* How often are the saints of God downcast and sad! They ought not to be so. I do not think they would be if they could always see their perfection in Christ. I know you have your, "corruption men," who always preach corruption and nothing else, telling you about the depravity of the heart and the innate evil of the soul. I like to read their works and to hear them—but I like to go a little further and to remember that I am "perfect in Christ Jesus." I do not wonder that those men who always dwell upon corruption should look so sad and seem so miserable. But I think, if a man could always see his perfection in Christ, he would be happy. What if distresses afflict me? I am perfect in Christ! Though Satan assaults me, I am perfect in Christ Jesus!

Though there are many things to be done before I get to Heaven, those are done for me in the Covenant of Divine Grace! There is nothing needed—Christ has done it all."—

"'It is finished!'
Hear the dying Savior cry."

And if it *is* finished, then am I complete in Him and can "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Poor Christian, you are perfect in Christ! Tried Christian, you are perfect in Jesus! If the Holy Spirit does but apply this Truth of God to your soul, if you were in the very caverns of the ocean, it would be enough to carry you up to the stars for joy, to think that you are perfect in Christ! There are some who are conscious that they have no perfection, but are covered with sin from head to foot. There is a poor wretch who has crept into this Chapel, tonight, and has felt that he would crawl down a mouse hole or stay in any corner of the building if he might but hear the sermon. He felt it was too hallowed a place for him to sit down—he was almost ashamed to stand in the company of the saints, he believed himself to be such an unworthy sinner. I tell you, Friend, if you are a poor, stripped, law-condemned sinner, you shall yet be able to see yourself "perfect in Christ Jesus." Man, does not this make your ears tingle? Does not your heart leap for joy at the very thought of it? Black with sin as you are, you shall be white one day! Filthy as you are, you shall yet be cleansed! Evil as you are, you shall be made good! Yes, however enormous your transgressions, however black your crimes—you may even have been a murderer—Christ's blood can wash the blood off your hands! You may have been a thief, but Jesus Christ restored that which He took not away, and He will forgive even your sins. You may be the vilest one that ever disgraced this earth—you may be a walking nuisance in the very streets—yet I tell you, if you believe in Jesus Christ this night, you shall go away perfectly clean! Oh, it is marvelous, this salvation! Christ takes a worm and transforms it into an angel! Christ takes a filthy thing and makes it into a cherub! Christ takes a black and deformed thing and makes it clean and matchless in its glory, peerless in its beauty—and fit to be the companion of seraphs!

O my Soul, stand and admire this blessed doctrine of Perfection in Christ Jesus! Though you should become more pure and pure every day, yet perfection would still be beyond you. The heights say perfection is not in them! The depths say, "Perfection is not here!" The caverns in the heart of the earth tell us, "Perfection is not in us." Perfection is in the Person of Jesus Christ, alone! O Christian, think of this! The robes of Jesus are put on you! The royal crown Christ Jesus wore is now, in God's eyes, on your head! The robe of azure which once He had upon His shoulders is now on yours! His silver sandals are yours! The golden zone, His belt of Glory, is yours! The matchless purity of His sinless life is yours! Everything that Christ has is yours—you are perfect in Him—there is nothing you can want which He cannot give you! If you go to His storehouse with a large list of your needs, saying, "I need this," or, "I need that," it is all there! And more than you will ever need is there. Do you want sanctification? It is there! Do you want redemption? It is there!

Do you want strengthening Grace? It is there! Do you want preservation? It is there! Man, are you standing, tonight, poor, naked, blind, miserable, desponding? I say—Be not so foolish as to remain in all your poverty and wretchedness when you may be rich! Why, Christian, are you now poor, ragged, stripped? Do you see the hole in that wall? It has a mark upon it in the shape of a cross. I will lend you the key called, "Promise." Go, insert it in the keyhole, and when you open it, whatever you need you shall find. First, there is a bath of gold—in it you shall be washed and become white as snow! Further on there hangs a robe and though you are now naked, you shall put it on. There is a crown for you to wear and there is everything else you can want. If you need bread, you shall find it, for it is said, "Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure." If you need comfort, it is there, for Christ is "the consolation of Israel." If you need forgiveness, it is there. All things are wrapped up in Christ!

This morning my eyes were dazzled when I saw the Queen's plate. I am not much of a believer in the Queen's plate, or anybody else's plate, but when I saw things of so much value—the precious jewels that sparkled here and there—I wondered at their amazing costliness and could not guess how much they would come to if they were all sold and the money given to the poor—which I rather felt inclined to wish they might be. But if I were once to get to see all the riches of Christ could I tell you how large His riches are—I would have to hold up my hands in astonishment and say, as I took up one mercy after another, "This is a golden mercy—how much is it worth?" I would be unable to tell you the value of any one of them! "Ah," the angels would say, "Do not try to estimate these precious things, for they had to be bought with Christ's blood. And until you know the price of Divine blood, you cannot tell the value of these mercies."

Now, to wind up my discourse, let me enquire who of you can take to yourselves this blessed doctrine? How many of you are "perfect in Christ Jesus?" Some man says, "I think I am perfect in myself. I am as respectable a gentleman as anybody living and I am not going to be insulted by any of your nonsense! I am at least as good as other people and, perhaps, rather better. And I think if Heaven does not go by favor, I most certainly shall get in, for I feel myself to be very good and righteous." Then hear the voice of Jesus—"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like unto whited sepulchers which, indeed, appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness. Even so you, also, outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within, you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." "Verily I say unto you that the publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you."

Another says, "Perfect in Christ Jesus? No, Sir, that I am not. I know I have no interest in the blood of Christ and if I were to say I had, it would be a barefaced lie—and my conscience would cry out against me. There is something in my heart which would forbid my lips to say it." Then, pray, do not say it, dear Heart, for I would not have you speak what is not true. If you feel that you have not any interest in Christ, say so to your own souls. It is best for you to look the matter in the face. You say

you do not know that Christ died for you. You say you are sure that you will sink into eternal torments if you die tonight. Well, take that thought home to your heart and, for half-an-hour think it over—"I am out of Christ. I am a condemned sinner and if I were to die, I feel I should sink into Hell." Do not be afraid of the thought. Do not be like the man who says, "I will not have that thought anymore," but be honest with yourselves. What is the good of cheating yourselves? Deal fairly with your own souls. It never does a man any hurt to examine his books and see if his accounts are all right. If he is a bankrupt, he will not lose anything by knowing it—if he is insolvent, he will get no richer by hiding it from himself. You may say, "It is true, I am a lost and condemned sinner." Well, the thought will bring you to your knees and you will cry, "O God, give me an interest in Jesus Christ!" And that mighty God who always hears prayer, will save you and you shall go on your way rejoicing and triumphing in Christ!

Then there is one who, when I ask the question, "Are you perfect in Christ Jesus?" will reply, "Ah, I trust I am! By humble faith I lay my hand on the head of Jesus and I know that I stand perfect in Him." Then, my Brother, give me your heart, let us shake hearts tonight! Oh, it is a sweet brotherhood, the brotherhood of the perfect in Christ Jesus! You are perfect in Him—then, my Brothers and Sisters, wipe those tears away—you are perfect in Christ! Do you know what yon poor sinner says? He says, "O Lord, if I could say that, I would not care about health, I would not care whether I was in poverty, or whether I was rich." He thinks, if he only knew himself to be "perfect in Christ," he would never be miserable as long as he lived. Then why, Beloved, are you down in your spirits while you are "perfect in Christ?" Why do you lie on the ground? It is time for you to take your harp from the willows, if you are "perfect in Christ." I can see no room for sadness! Suppose that you are going to a poor house where you have not a bit of fire? Never mind, you can say, "I am perfect in Jesus." Perhaps you will scarcely know where the next meal will come from—let this thought cheer you, "Perfect in Jesus."

Though the wind may come and blow between the rags that cover you, if you can say, "I am perfect in Jesus," you can be content with poverty! Though you are in pain and tossing about in your bed, if you can say, "I am perfect in Jesus," it will be like medicine to soothe your spirits! And when grim Death appears, you only need look him in the face and say, "Perfect in Jesus," and in that moment Death will change into an angel, pain will be turned into bliss and sorrow into immortal Glory! God give all of us to realize that we are perfect in Jesus, in Jesus only, in Jesus forever! Bless His precious name! Hallelujah to His Person, glory to His Grace! Seraphs, sing out His praises! Cherubs, take up the note! You rocks, you hills, burst forth into song! All you Christians, sing praises to Him who loved us with an everlasting love and who will carry us safely home to Glory to be with Him forever and ever!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 55

Verse 1. *Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money; come, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* Let no one ask whether he may come to Christ for salvation—he is bid to come! Whoever wills to come is welcome. "Ho!" says God, as men cry when they have goods to sell and would attract the passerby. And not merely to one does He speak, but to everyone—"Ho! Everyone who thirsts"—whatever is the age he lives in and to whatever age he may, himself, have attained "Ho! Everyone who thirsts." But is there anything to be had by those who come? There is in God exactly that which every soul needs! First, "waters" for the thirsty. There is even more than absolute necessities—"wine and milk," God has an abundance of Grace, yes, a superabundance! He can give us all we need and even more than we desire. Oh, turn not away when God the Father cries, "Ho!"

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not? Listen diligently to Me and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* Apart from God, there is nothing for us but destruction. We may spend our money and our labor, too, but happiness is not to be found by the creature apart from the Creator, or by a sinner apart from the Savior. God has so constituted the human mind that it cannot be perfect without Him.

3. *Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live.* It seems a very little thing to do, does it not? Simply to hear—to incline the ear—yet that is the way of salvation. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Alas, nowadays the mass of men will not hear God's message of mercy—they pass it by as if it were an old worn-out tale of which they knew quite enough! Hear, then, what God says to His poor forgetful creature—"Hear, and your soul shall live."

3. *And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* Will God make a covenant with man? Can it be that He will strike hands with sinful man and enter into league and compact with him? Yes, so He says. If men will but incline their ear and come to Him, He will enter into covenant with them. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." "But David is dead," says someone. Yes, I know he is, but the David, here meant, always lives—it is Jesus, the Son of God!

4. *Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.* Jesus Christ is the people's Witness and Leader. Born among them, living among them, dying for them, living still to save them—and God declares that He gives this Christ to such as hear Him, to such as incline their ear and come unto Him.

5. *Behold, you shall call a nation that you know not and nations that knew you not shall run unto you because of the Lord your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you.* Brothers and Sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ did not die in vain. He died to redeem His chosen people and those whom He redeemed, He will certainly have. Even though some reject Him, others will not. God has power over human hearts and where Christ's Gospel is faithfully preached and attended by the Holy Spirit's power, sinners must come to Christ! Their will shall sweetly yield to the supremacy of love. Even though they set themselves against Christ, yet

they shall come when the Lord draws them! And Glory shall be gotten for His holy name by the salvation of those who never even thought of being saved!

6. *Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.* "Seek the Lord while He may be found." That is, *NOW.* "Call upon Him while He is near." He is near now! Wherever Christ is lifted up and His Gospel is proclaimed, there He is according to His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

7. *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.* What a grand word that is! "He will abundantly pardon." However abundant sin may be, God's pardon is still more abundant! As Paul puts it, "Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound." Sin may be like the great mountains, but the mercy of God is like Noah's flood that rose above the tops of the highest hills! "He will abundantly pardon."

8. *For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD.* Oh, what a mercy it is to be taught to think God's thoughts and to be led in God's ways! It is the entrance into a new life! It is something infinitely beyond the greatest elevation to which any ordinary life can ever reach by its own unaided power!

9-12. *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth good and bad, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.* "For you"—that is, you who have heard God's Word and believed it—"you shall go out with joy." Happy hearts help to make a happy world! He who has found his Savior, received God's pardon and learned God's thoughts, shall find the whole world full of music to him, wherever he may be!

13. *Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.* Wherever God's Grace begins to work, it cuts up thorns and thistles—and plants in place of them fir trees and myrtle trees. Oh, that His Grace might renew each one of us! And, then, when that blessed work has been done, may we never cease to glorify that dear name by the power of which we have been changed!

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

ALTO AND BASS
NO. 2582

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 7, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 1, 1883.

"He has filled the hungry with good things; and
the rich He has sent away empty."
Luke 1:53.

THIS song of Mary is full of sweet Gospel teaching. She was evidently a woman well instructed in Divine Truth and, though but young in years, she must have been deeply experienced in the things of God. Notice how she casts the Truth of God into the form of song—there is a wisdom in this, for we are to teach and admonish one another, "in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." Truth is never more likely to abide in the memory and to impress the heart than when it is delivered in verse. Both the ears of men and the minds of men delight in rhyme and rhythm—memory grasps and retains Truth more readily when it is put into poetic form than in any other. Therefore they do well who enrich the Church with "Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." And you who cannot make songs will do equally well if you sing them! Let us set the Gospel to music! Let us especially do this in our daily life. I think that the Doctrines of Grace were never intended to be made into a dirge, but they make a most heavenly marriage song. The great Truths of the Gospel were never meant to be told with dolorous tones as if they were sad solemnities, but they are meant to fill us with delight—and if they thoroughly permeate our nature, they will turn our whole life into a hallelujah and make every breath a verse of a sonnet that shall know no end! Whenever you feel most glad in the things of God, be sure you do as Mary did—sing out your gladness and make the people of God know that the things of Christ are things of joy to you. Obey the poet's injunction—

"Children of the heavenly King,
As you journey, sweetly sing!
Sing your Savior's worthy praise,
Glorious in His works and ways!"

I commend to you the song of Mary for another reason—not only because she turned the Truth of God into poetry and song, but because she sang of mercies which were not yet visible to her. She had, with gladness, beheld the King of Glory in her own heart, although the promised Child was not yet born, so with exulting faith she sings, "My soul does magnify the Lord." Brothers and Sisters, there are some of you who cannot even

sing over a mercy when it is born, but here is a woman who sings over an *unborn mercy*. Oh, what a faith is this! If you have like precious faith, what a joy it will give to your lives! Is there nothing to sing about today? Then borrow a song from tomorrow! Sing of what is yet to be! Is this world dreary? Then think of the next! Is all around you dark? Then look upward, where they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light! "Yet a little while"—and we know not how short that, "little while," will be—and, "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Then shall the children of the bride chamber rejoice with unspeakable joy, because the Bridegroom Himself has come and the day of His marriage has arrived! I beseech you, if you have been silent and hung your harps on the willows, take them down at once and sing and give praise to God for the glory which is yet to be revealed in us—the precious things that are laid up for them that love Him, which eye has not seen, nor ear heard—but the certainty of which He has revealed unto us by His Spirit. Sing unto the Lord concerning mercies yet unborn! Sing those sweet verses which I so often quote to you—

"And a 'new song' is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set.
Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not tasted yet!
I have a heritage of joy
That yet I must not see—
The hand that bled to make it mine
Is keeping it for me."

There is something more than this in Mary's song, for it is made up entirely of what God has done. Let me read you a verse or two—"He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden. He that is mighty has done to me great things. He has showed strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats, He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty." It is all about HIM, you see—all concerning what the Lord had done.

If I had to write a song about myself—humph!—well, that is all I could write! And if you had to write a song about yourself, it would be a wretched ditty if it spoke the truth—and I hope you would not want to sing it if it were not the truth! Some people's songs are all about themselves, and very poor things they are. I heard of a Brother, the other day, who made a speech, and someone said to me, "Would you like a full report of his speech?" I said, "Yes," for I was curious to hear what he would say. The friend said, "I was there and took a full report of his speech. Here it is." He passed it over to me and there was nothing but one great capital letter, "I." I have known some people who could both speak and sing that way, but that straight, stiff-backed letter, "I," makes a very poor song. The less we sing about it, the better. There is no such note in the whole gamut, so let us never attempt to sing it. But when we sing, let us sing unto the Lord and let our song be concerning what *He* has done.

Where shall we begin, then? Let us begin with everlasting love. "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." Where shall we end? Well, there can be no end to this song, for the Lord's mercies are new every morning—great is His faithfulness and His loving kindness to His people never knows a pause, much less a close! Therefore, when we begin to sing of what He is doing, let us go on to sing it again, and again, and again, and again! And never let us spoil the tune by coming down to sing of what *we* have done, or offering any praise or glory to the sons of men.

Do you, then, children of God, see what an example Mary sets you? Turn the Truth of God into song—sing of unborn mercies—and sing of what the Lord has done and will do, world without end!

Now we come to consider the stanza of Mary's song which forms our text. There are two parts to her music. "He has filled the hungry with good things"—that is *the air,* or perhaps we may say, *the alto.* "And the rich He has sent away empty"—that is *the base.* As we mean to play the bass softly and to give the other part more emphasis, we will take the bass first, and then, afterwards, we will have the alto.

I. First, then, here is THE BASS—"The rich He has sent away empty."

Are there any such people in the world in a *spiritual* sense? Yes. Every now and then we come across them. They are not truly rich—they are naked, poor and miserable—but they are rich in their own esteem and think they need nothing. They have kept the Law of God from their youth up, or, if they have not done that, they have done something quite as good. They are very full of grace and, sometimes, they wonder that they can hold so much! They are as good as ever they can be and they hardly know how to put up with the company of some Christians—especially those who are mourners in Zion and are lamenting their sins and their departure from God. They have no patience with these people! They stand by themselves, as did he who was called a Pharisee and who went up to the Temple to pray. And as they hear others making confession of sin, they proudly say, "Lord, we thank You that we are not as other men are." Very superior persons, indeed, are they—sometimes in education, sometimes in rank and station, sometimes in the weight of their money-bags—but anyhow, very superior indeed! They consider themselves the "upper-crust" of society. They are spiritually and morally rich before God—so they think.

What does the Lord do with such people? Mary says He sends them away empty. They verily thought that he would come out to them! They are so respectable that they are accustomed to be run after and they are greatly astonished that Jesus of Nazareth does not at once bow down to them and thank them for patronizing Him! But He sends them away empty. He wants nothing of them and while they are in such a condition, He has nothing for them. Off they must go with such a word as this in their ears, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners unto repentance." So He sends them away. Does He not give them something as they go? No, He sends them away *empty*—giving them no comfort, no joy!

He certainly does not flatter them, for His lips are lips of Truth—no encouragement—for His office is to pull down the mighty from their seats and to spoil the glory of all human boasting and make it bite the dust! He sends them away empty. Does this seem to you like hard treatment? Mary did not think so—she *sang* about it, she was glad of it! And so am I. "Why?" you ask. Why?

Well, first, *how could Christ fill these people?* They are already full! What can Christ do for a man who has no sin? He came on purpose to save His people from their sins—but if we haven't any, He has nothing to do with us. How shall Christ be bread to a man who is not hungry? How shall He be life to a man who has life in himself? How shall He be the Alpha and Omega of the salvation of a man who is the first and the last to himself and who begins and carries on his own salvation? No, a doctor does not go to heal the man who has no sickness—and Christ does not give His alms away to those who are not needy. When He makes a feast, it is for the poor and the hungry, for they cannot pay Him back except by giving Him their gratitude and their love. So it is right—since Christ cannot do anything for these rich people in their present condition—He sends them away empty.

And, next, *what glory would Christ have if He were to fill them?* To fill the full is no great achievement! To heal the healthy is no great triumph! To save those who are already saved is surely a superfluity! To give righteousness to those who are already righteous is ridiculous! And to find eternal life for those who have all the life they need is an absurdity! It is well, then, that those who are so full should be sent away empty. They cannot be filled and if they could be, there would be no glory for Christ at all in filling them.

Next, supposing that Christ were to do something for them, then *His riches and theirs would have to mix together.* That would never do—human merits and Christ's merits to be placed side by side as of equal value? Who thinks of sewing on a royal robe a rag picked off a dunghill? Yet, what else are those men doing who think that they can add their own righteousness to the righteousness of Christ? No, Sir, if you are rich and increased in goods, you would only have to take Christ's goods into your store and lay them along with your own goods—and what a comedown that would be for the righteousness of Christ—to lie side by side with your own as though it were worth no more! You would need to put up over your door the name of your firm—"Self and Christ." And salvation would have to be the work of yourself and the Savior, too—and you would want to share the glory of it. No, no! That can never be! Send that man away empty who has the impertinence to think that he can add something of his own to the merits of Christ, the only Savior!

Yet again, well may such people be sent away empty—and we may almost be glad of it and sing about it as we see what they do. If a man does not really want salvation and he reads the Bible or hears a sermon, he *criticizes the style of it.* When some gentlemen go out to dinner, they are very busy examining the table and the ornaments with which it is

adorned. They watch the waiters and criticize every dish that is served. Oh, how daintily they taste everything, for they are connoisseurs and everything must be most *exquisite* to please them! But when you and I come home from a day's work, we do not trouble about that kind of thing—we want something to eat and are grateful to have it. Those who have no appetite for Christ begin picking, first, at this and then at that, and even the Bible is not good enough for them—they want to have this amended and that altered! As for the poor sermons preached by mortal men—this does not suit them and the other does not suit them—nothing pleases them. There are some children who always pick over their food and their father says, "Ah, my boy, if you are sent to the workhouse for a week and get put on short commons, I'll guarantee that you will eat that good meat! You will find an appetite then! So Christ, when these people are at His table turning over every morsel of the heavenly meat, sends them packing! And it serves them right, for they spoil the banquet for those who would enjoy it.

Beside that, they not only criticize, but *they also quibble.* Preach the Doctrines of Grace to a man who never had a sense of sin and he says, "I don't believe in Calvinism." Tell him of the Sovereignty of God, which is a sweet morsel to God's own people, and he says "I, I, I—I don't believe in that doctrine. I think there is some merit in the creature—some claim in fallen humanity to the goodness of God." Solomon said, "To the hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet," but to this man, who is so full of conceit, there is nothing in the Gospel that is good enough—so he puffs at this and sneers at that, and "pshaws" at the other—and if you put the butter in a lordly dish, such as the children like to see, he will not have it! Therefore Christ will not have him—He sends him away empty.

I do not know whether it is not the very best thing that could happen to some of those who think themselves rich that they should be sent away empty, for if they were once to feel their emptiness, they would then come to Christ in quite another style—and then would they join in singing Mary's song, "He has filled the hungry with good things." If any of you are satisfied with your own goodness—and perhaps there are some such people here—I would remind you of what the farmer said to Mr. Hervey. When Mr. Hervey had become the rector of the parish, he went round and spoke to his parishioners. And he asked a farmer, "What have we to overcome in order to get to Heaven?" "Well, Sir," he replied, "you are a clergyman and I think that you ought to tell me, and not ask me to tell you that." "Well," said Mr. Hervey, "I think that the most difficult thing to overcome is sinful self." "Excuse me," said the farmer, "but I have found one thing harder than that." "What is that?" enquired Mr. Hervey. "To overcome righteous self," answered the man. And that, I believe, is a most solemn Truth of God! In the case of some of you, I am a deal more afraid of your self-righteousness than I am of your unrighteousness! One thing I know, Christ thinks more of our sins than He does of our righteousness, for He gave Himself for our sins—I never heard that He gave Himself for our righteousness. By His most precious blood, He has put

away the sins of all who trust Him. But take care that your self-righteousness does not come in between you and the Savior, for if it does, you will be among the rich whom He will send away empty! Empty your pockets and make yourselves poor! I do not mean in money, but in spirit. Get down to spiritual poverty and beggary, for that is the *only* way to attain spiritual riches!

So much for the bass—"The rich He has sent away empty."

II. Now we come to THE ALTO of this song of Mary—"He has filled the hungry with good things." I have not many minutes left, so I will pack my thoughts closely.

First, here is c*hosen company.* "He has filled *the hungry* with good things." Who are the hungry? Well, they are men and women full of desires for spiritual blessings. They are always desiring good things. They do not say much about what they think, but they have great longings for many things that they do not yet possess. Are you, dear Friend, desiring to be saved? Are you desiring to be reconciled to God? Are you desiring to look unto Christ by faith? Are you desiring to be sanctified? Are you desiring to grow in Grace? Then you are among the hungry ones.

But hunger is more than a desire—it is an appetite—it is a craving born of a stern necessity. A man must eat, or he must die. Therefore hunger is not a desire that he can lay aside. Have you come into such a condition of heart that you must have Christ or die? That you must have mercy or be lost? That you must be forgiven or be cast into Hell? And do you begin, now, to really hunger and thirst after the righteousness which is in Christ? If so, you are among the people whom He will fill with good things! The hungry man sometimes becomes a fainting man. He may tighten his belt to try to stop the gnawing of the inward wolf, but it cannot be stopped, and he gets to feel as if he had no strength and were ready to be dissolved. Do you feel like that? Do you need mercy so badly that you hardly know how to ask for it, you have become so weak, you have sunk down so low? Well, I am glad of it! You are among the very first of those whom Christ will fill with good things!

The hungry man is often a despised man. They say of such a person, "Ah, he has a lean and hungry look!" People do not like to associate with men who are very hungry, so they say, "Ah, poor beggar! I do not want to be where he is." You have heard that said, have you not? And that is just what men say of those who are spiritually hungry. "Very poor company is that man. The other day, when he was sitting in the room where we were all making fun, he was sighing all the time. There is no merriment about him! He sits by himself in the corner, or he gets into his own room and he begins crying, and says that he is a lost man if God does not have mercy upon him." Ah, that is the man for me! I would sit up all night, seven nights running, I think, to meet with people of that kind! They are the sort for whom Christ died, they are the sort Christ loves to feed—"He has filled the hungry with good things."

And you know that when a man gets to be very poor and hungry, not only do people think little of him, but he generally gets to think very little

of himself. When the bread is out of a man, the spirit is out of him, too, and he goes groping up and down the streets to try to find a place where he may beg a bit of bread. He is "down at the heel," men say. Is there anyone here who is "down at the heel" spiritually, altogether done for? Poor creature, you are the one Christ came to save! You are the very sort for whom the banquet of love is spread! Your emptiness is that for which Christ is seeking—"He has filled the hungry with good things." He has been doing this ever since Mary sang of it—He has done it in the case of many who are now present and He is ready to do it for you. Only open your mouth wide that He may fill it! Put your trust in Him and you shall be filled with good things! That is the first part of this sweet song—the chosen company—"the hungry."

Note, next, *the choice meat.* "He has filled the hungry with *good things."* Mary might have said, "He has filled the hungry with the best of things." See what "good things" Christ puts into a hungry man's mouth. "Lord," he says, "I am a sinner. I need pardon." Christ answers, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins." Is not that good meat to put in the hungry man's mouth? "Lord," he says, "I need renewal, I need a change of heart." The Lord replies, "A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Certainly that is a good thing with which to fill his mouth! "But, Lord, if I am saved, I am so weak that I do not know how I shall stand." "Your shoes shall be iron and brass; and as your days, so shall your strength be." Is not that a good morsel with which to fill his mouth? "Ah, Lord!" he says, "I am prone to wander and I fear that I shall go astray again." "I will put My fear in your heart, that you shall not depart from Me." Oh, is not that a blessed morsel to fill his mouth? There is no need which a poor destitute sinner can have which is not provided for in Christ! Listen, poor hungry sinner! There is laid up in Christ all the food that you need between here and Heaven—the best of food—the very food that your sickly fainting spirit needs is all stored up in Him! How sweet is this song! "He has filled the hungry with good things."

The third thing to be noted is this, *the completeness of the supply.* "He has *filled* the hungry with good things." It is a good thing to give a hungry man a bit and a sup just to stay his stomach for a while, but that is not Christ's way of feeding the famishing—"He has *filled* the hungry with good things." I appeal to those of you here present who were once hungry and who came to Christ—how did Christ treat you, my Brothers and Sisters? Did He give you just a little scrap of spiritual food, or has He filled you with good things? I think I hear you say, "Sir, now I have Christ to live upon, I need nothing else. There is nothing outside the great circle of Christ that I could possibly wish for—He is all I need, all I desire, all I can imagine, all for life and all for death, all for this world and all for the world that is to come." I ask you—"Are you perfectly satisfied with Christ?" "Yes!" you say, "I need none but Christ. He is my All-in-All." Ah, my Brother, my Sister! I, also, can speak as you do. There is an intense

enjoyment in the man who has received Christ. He has not only enough, but sometimes he so overflows with satisfaction that he does not know how to tell his tale to others and he longs for the time when he shall get to Heaven—when the strings of his tongue shall be loosed and he will stop the angels as they go down the golden streets and say, "Please, bright spirit, stay a while and let me tell you what Christ did for me, for He has filled me to the brim with His own dear Self and His own infinite love! He has fed me till I need no more." Is not that a blessed word? "He has *filled* the hungry with good things."

Now, lastly, this song tells us of *the glorious Benefactor.* "HE has filled the hungry with good things." It is God that does it all! He provides the feast. He invites the guests. He brings them to the table. He gives them the appetite, He gives them the power to receive what He has prepared. It is He who fills the hungry with good things. I am so glad of that, for I know some poor hungry souls that cannot even feed themselves—but the Lord can fill them with good things. We have brought them to the table laden with spiritual dainties, yet their soul has abhorred all manner of meat and they have drawn near to the gates of death. But when no preacher can feed you, God can! And when your very soul seems to turn away, even from heavenly comforts, till you say with the Psalmist, "My soul refused to be comforted," the Lord, the Holy Spirit, *the* Comforter, can bring the Truth of God home to your heart till you say, "He has done it! He has done it! He has filled the hungry with good things."

If I had the time and the power, I would like to take that word, He—HE—HE, and speak it as with a trumpet voice—"HE has filled the hungry with good things!" Who made the earth and the heavens and filled them with light and glory? The answer is, "He has done it." It was the Lord alone who redeemed His people from their sins, who paid the purchase price, who wrestled with their adversaries and trod them under His feet as grapes are trod in the winepress! "He has done it. HE has done it!" Unto His name be all the praise! Who began the good work in you, my Brother, my Sister in Christ? Who has carried it on up to now? Who will perfect it? Like thunder, I hear the answer from all the redeemed who are before the Throne of God—"HE, HE, HE has done it, and unto His name be honor and glory forever and ever!"

Go to Him, thirsty ones! Go to Him by a simple, childlike faith, and you shall then come and join with us in the song, "He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty." The Lord bless you, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 148; LUKE 1:5-35; 46-56.

We will first read a short Psalm inciting all to praise the Lord and then we will read part of the first Chapter of Luke's Gospel, especially noticing Mary's song of praise. It is a blessed thing to indulge our holy gratitude and to let it have speech in sacred Psalm and song. Praise is the end of

prayer and preaching. It is the ear of the wheat: it is God's harvest from all the seed of Grace that He has sown.

Psalm 148:1. *Praise you the LORD.* Hallelujah!

1. *Praise you the LORD from the heavens.* Begin the song, you holy angels before the Throne of God. Lead us in praise, O you glorified spirits above!

1. *Praise Him in the heights.* Sing aloud, you that sit at God's right hand in the heavenly places! Let the highest praises be given to the Most High.

2, 3. *Praise Him, all His angels: praise Him all His hosts. Praise Him, sun and moon: praise Him, all you stars of light.* Shine out His glory! You are but dim reflections of His brightness, yet praise Him.

4. *Praise Him, you Heaven of heavens, and you waters that are above the heavens.* Stored up there for man's use and benefit. You clouds that look black to us and yet are big with blessings, praise the Lord. See, Beloved, how the song comes down from the praises of the angels nearest the Throne of God, to the glorified saints, then to the sun, moon, stars and the clouds that float in the firmament of Heaven!

5, 6. *Let them praise the name of the LORD: for He commanded, and they were created. He has also established them forever and ever: He has made a decree which shall not pass.* Or, pass away. Now the Psalmist begins at the bottom and works up to the top.

7. *Praise the LORD from the earth, you dragons, and all deeps.* Right down there, however low the caverns may be, let the strange creatures that inhabit the secret places in the very bottoms of the mountains and the depths of the seas—let them send out the deep bass of their praise!

8-10. *Fire, and hail; snow, and vapor; stormy wind fulfilling His word: mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl.* If you cannot praise God by soaring up like eagles. If you feel more like the creeping things of the earth, still praise Him! There is something very pleasant in the spiritual allusion that grows out of this verse. You who seem like poor worms of the dust, or insects of an hour, can yield your little need of praise to God!

11-14. *Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: both young men and maidens; old men and children: let them praise the name of the LORD: for His name, alone, is excellent; His glory is above the earth and Heaven. He also exalts the horn of His people, the praise of all His saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto Him.* They ought to sing best and most sweetly, because they are nearest to His heart. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." If all other tongues are silent, let them praise the Lord.

14. *Praise the LORD.* The Psalm ends, as it began, with Hallelujah! "Praise the Lord."

Luke 1:5, 6. *There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of*

the Lord, blameless. There have been some good people who have lived in very bad times. Never was there a worse reign than that of Herod—seldom or never a better man and woman than Zacharias and Elizabeth. Let no man excuse himself for sinning because of the times in which he lives. You may be rich in Divine Grace when others around you have none, even as Gideon's fleece was wet with dew when the whole floor was dry. God help us, in these evil days, to be "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless"!

7. *And they had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now well advanced in years.* We do not, at the present time, understand the anguish which filled the heart of an Eastern woman who had no child. It was considered to be a disgrace—and many suffered very bitterly on that account, as did Hannah, Rachel and others.

8-12. *And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.* Zacharias must have been astonished as he saw that strange visitor—no wonder that "fear fell upon him."

13-17. *But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you shall have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.* Happy is the father of such a child! Happy is that man whose office it is to be the herald of Christ! Brothers, many of us are called to that office in a certain sense as we come in our Master's name and preach concerning Him—

"'Tis all my business here below
To cry, 'Behold the Lamb.'"

And in this way we may be partakers of John the Baptist's joy!

18-20. *And Zacharias said unto the angel, How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well advanced in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel that stands in the Presence of God; and am sent to speak unto you, and to show you these glad tidings. And, behold, you shall be dumb, and not able to speak until the day that these things*—These glad tidings—

20. *Shall be performed, because you believe not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.* Many a child of God is dumb because of unbelief. Mary believed and, therefore, she sang a holy, joyous song—a sweet canticle of delight—"My soul does magnify the Lord." But Zacharias, be-

cause of his unbelief, was unable to speak. I wonder whether there is a man here who might have spoken for his God with power, but whose mouth is closed because of his unbelief? If so, may the Lord hasten the time when his dumbness shall be ended!

21, 22. *And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.* By the signs he made, he impressed them with the fact that something extraordinary had happened.

23-25. *And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus has the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein He looked on me to take away my reproach among men.* I do not wonder, that in her solemn joy, she shunned the gossips of the neighborhood and kept herself in seclusion. I believe that there is many a soul which, when it has found Christ, feels itself much too full of joy to speak and asks not for a crowded temple, but for a quiet chamber where the heart may pour itself out before God.

26-35. *And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her and said, Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for you have found favor with God. And, behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also that holy Thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God.* So was she thus visited, and thus she believed with a wonderful faith—much too wonderful for me to describe in this place. But now let us see what Mary said when she went to visit her cousin, Elizabeth.

46, 47. *And Mary said, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.* She needed a Savior, you see. Though about to become the mother of Jesus, Mary did not think herself without sin! Her eyes still looked to Him who should be her Savior from guilt and condemnation.

48-55. *For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty has done to me great things and holy is His name. And His mercy*

is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. He has showed strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant, Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to His seed forever. This is one of the sweetest songs that was ever sung and is equal to any of those which came from the Inspired lips of the Hebrew Prophets. Well might she sing who had been thus favored! Oh, if Christ Jesus should come to any of us by faith, what reason would we have for singing! And will not each one of us, who has been thus honored, cry with Mary, "My soul does magnify the Lord"?

56. *And Mary lived with her about three months, and returned to her own house.* What wonderful interviews those two holy women had! The one well advanced in years, and the other youthful, yet both highly favored of God. I wonder what they said? Doubtless angels remember their charming conversation. May the day come when all that fear the Lord, both men and women, shall speak often, one to another, concerning their Redeemer and all that relates to His glorious cause! And then the Lord shall write another Book of Remembrance concerning their hallowed fellowship and communion!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 397, 778.

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

RAIN AND GRACE—A PARALLEL
NO. 2583

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 14, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 5, 1883.

"Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water, or a path for the thunderbolt, to cause it to rain on the earth, where there is no one; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man; to satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth?"
Job 38:25-27.

JOB was an admirable man, but the Lord meant to make him still better. The best of men are but men at the best and though Job was, in a certain sense, perfect, yet he was not perfectly perfect—there was a further stage beyond that which he had reached, otherwise he would not have been tried as he was. But because the Lord knew that there was something better for Job than he had already attained, he had to be subjected to extraordinary trial. He was such a valuable diamond that there had to be more cutting for him than for a common stone. He was made of such good metal that he paid for being put into the furnace—there would come out something still more pleasing to the great Refiner if He cast that which was so precious into the most fervent heat. Hence it was that Job was so greatly tried. Yet, after all his trials, it seemed as if he would miss their blessed result, for his three friends—the miserable comforters—appeared to be the meddlers in the whole design. By their cruel, cutting, sarcastic observations, they irritated Job so that it looked as if he would be harder instead of softer because of the fires.

Sometimes, when a man knows that he is being unjustly and unfairly treated, he stiffens his back, hardens himself and influences which, by themselves, might have worked great tenderness of spirit, are spoiled because something else is thrown in. Job was in this condition and he, therefore, seemed to rise in his own estimation rather than to sink, as was desired, until, at last, the Lord ended the dispute by manifesting Himself. Out of the whirlwind He spoke to Job and bade him gird up his loins and meet his Maker if he dared. Then it was that Job was brought to his right position and, at the end, he said, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Then Job realized the benefit of his affliction—but not till then. When the Lord revealed to Job His supremacy, His eternal Glory, and in that light compelled him to see his own imperfection and nothingness—then the Patriarch's trials became sanctified to him.

Our text is a part of God's challenge to Job. The Lord seemed to say, "If Job is, indeed, half as great as he thinks he is, let him see whether he can do what his Creator does." He is challenged about so slight a matter, apparently, as the sending of the rain. Does Job know how it is done? Can he explain all the phenomena? Our modern scientists tell us how rain is produced and I suppose their explanation is the correct one, but they cannot tell us how it is that power is given to carry out what they call, "the laws of Nature." Neither can they make the rain, themselves, nor, if a drought were to continue till the nation was on the verge of famine, would they be able to cover the skies with blackness, or even to water a single acre of land! No, with all our explanations, it is still a great mystery—and it remains a secret with God how it is that He waters the earth with rain.

I am not going into that matter at this time. I intend to use the rain as an emblem of the Grace of God, as it usually is in Scripture—a figure of that blessed overflowing of the river of God's Love which comes down to quench our thirst of sin, to refresh us, to enliven us, to feed us, to soften us and to cleanse us. This matchless water of life has all sorts of uses and God sends it, when He pleases, in abundant showers upon His own people according to that ancient Word of God, "You, O God, did send a plentiful rain whereby You did confirm Your inheritance, when it was weary." The Hebrew means, "You did pour out blessings," as from a cornucopia, and so, "You did confirm Your inheritance, when it was weary." There are many here who are weary—they need to be refreshed and they are praying to God to send a gracious shower, a copious distilling of His matchless Grace upon their hearts and lives. I am going to preach upon this passage with the desire that while I am speaking, such a blessing may come upon us, or that, at any rate, we may begin to pray for it.

I. My first point is that, AS GOD ALONE GIVES RAIN, SO GOD ALONE GIVES GRACE.

Jehovah asks of Job the question, "Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water, or a path for the thunderbolt, to cause it to rain on the earth?" It is God, and God only, who creates rain. We cannot make it, but He can and He does give it. And it is absolutely so with His Grace—*The Lord must give it, or there will be none.* If it had not been for His eternal plan whereby He purposed to give Grace to the guilty, the whole race of mankind would have been left, like the fallen angels, without hope and without mercy! The angels that kept not their first estate, but rebelled against God, were given over to punishment without any intimation whatever of redemption for them—or of any possibility of their restoration. God, who does as He wills with His Grace which is most sovereign and free, passed over the fallen angels and made His Grace to light on insignificant and guilty men. And it has been after the same fashion in all history—if God has withheld the blessings of His Grace from any of the nations, they have not been able to procure them for themselves.

One lone light burned in Israel for hundreds of years while the rest of the inhabitants of the earth were left in darkness. And the world, with all its wisdom, could not and did not find God. Men, in their ignorance, set up idols almost as numerous as their worshippers—and in their blind-

ness they went this way and that way, but always away from God. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from he Father of Lights"—as certainly as the rain comes down from Heaven! There is but one source of supply for Grace and that source is God Himself. He gives Grace and, "He gives more Grace." otherwise there would be none whatever among the sons of men!

And, moreover, *it is God who finds the way by which His Grace can come to men.* I will not enter into any elaborate explanations of my text. It indicates that God finds a way by which the rain comes down from the upper regions to water the thirsty fields. "Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water?" Only God Himself has made a channel for the rain—*we* could not have made it. So is it with His Grace, otherwise how could Grace have come to man? How was it possible for the thrice-holy God to deal leniently with sinners who had provoked Him to anger? How could it be that the Judge of all the earth, who must be just, should, nevertheless, pass by transgression, iniquity and sin? This is a problem which would have perplexed a Sanhedrim of seraphim! If all the mightiest intelligences that God has ever made had sat together in solemn conclave for a thousand years, they would not have been able to solve this problem—How can God be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly? Infinite Wisdom devised that matchless way of substitution by which, through the death of the Son of God, men might be saved! There is the stamp of Divinity about that verse, "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

It is God who gives Grace and God who, in a Divinely gracious way, has given His only-begotten and well-beloved Son to be the channel through which Grace can come down to guilty men! Blessed be God for this and let His name be adored forever! Having thus resolved upon giving Grace to men and having made a channel in which His Grace might flow to men, let it never be forgotten that *God now directs the pathway of all the Grace that comes into the world.* Our parallel, in the natural world, is that, according to the original of our text, there is a sort of canal, or path, made for every drop of water as it descends from the heavens to the earth. There is not the most minute particle of rain that is left to fall according to its own fancy or will—each single drop of water that is blown aslant by the March wind, is as surely steered by God as are yonder glorious stars revolving in their orbits! There is a purpose of God concerning every solitary flake of snow and every single portion of hail that comes down from Heaven—all these are ordered according to His eternal counsel and will. God alone can arrange all this.

It always seems to me to be a very wonderful way in which the world is watered. If all the rain were to pour upon us at once in a deluge, we should all be drowned—but it comes down gently, drop by drop, and thus it effects God's purpose much more surely than if it burst in one tremendous waterspout destroying everything. God, by the mysterious laws by which He governs inanimate matter, has so planned it that the rain shall come in drops exactly the right size, such drops as shall hang upon a tiny blade of grass and scarcely shall bend it. See how the bright drops, like so many diamonds, hang in myriads on the hedgerows just

the right size to hang there—neither too large nor too little. So is it with the Grace of God—it is given sovereignly and wisely.

I daresay some Christian people think that they would like to have, in their first five minutes after believing in Christ, all the Grace they will ever have—but it cannot be. I have often admired that expression of the Apostle Paul, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace; wherein He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." God teaches us His will, but He does not teach us too much at a time. Have you ever seen children who have been in school, so hardly driven by their masters that they have been mentally crippled and have never made the advance they ought to have made because they were driven too hard at the first? I have met with this sort of thing, spiritually. In several cases I have known, men and women have learned so much of the things of God in a short time that their reason has been most seriously jeopardized. I often have to look at young converts and almost to pray that they might not learn too much at once, for the deep things of God are so amazing to a man who is just plucked out of the world that if the cases of insanity through religion were much more frequent than they are, I should not at all be astonished! I wonder how any of us can bear what God has taught us already. If you could give eyesight to a man born blind and then, in a moment, were to place him in the full blaze of the sun, it would be a serious danger to him. If he has been long in the darkness, he must see the light by degrees. In like manner, we ought to thank God that He does not deluge us all at once with all the Grace we shall ever have, but He gives it to us gently, as soft vernal showers which, in Infinite Wisdom, distil upon the thirsty earth.

So we have seen that God gives Grace and God finds a way of giving Grace. And then God directs the way of His Grace and the measure and the manner of it. And He does it all in wisdom and prudence.

See, then, my dear Friends—I hope you all do—*our absolute dependence upon God for all spiritual blessings.* A farmer may do all he likes with his ground, but he will never have a harvest if God withholds the rain. He may be the most skillful agriculturist who ever lived, but he can do nothing if the heavens above him are as brass. If he were to call in the most learned astronomer of the day, there is not one who, with his wand, could move the stars, or cause the clouds to open and pour down rain upon the earth. If there were sore trouble in the land because farming was failing for lack of rain, if both Houses of Parliament were to be called together and the Queen were to sit upon her throne of state—and they were unanimously to pass an act ordering the rain to fall—He that sits in the heavens would laugh! The Lord would have them in derision, for the key of the rain is in no hand but that of Jehovah. It is exactly so with the Grace of God. You and I cannot command it. The presence of the most holy men in our midst would not, of itself, bring it. The most earnest preaching, the most Scriptural doctrine, the most faithful obedience to ordinances would not make it necessary that we should receive Grace. God must give it—He is an absolute Sovereign and we are entirely dependent upon Him.

To what does this fact drive us? It drives us to prayer. When we have done all that we can—and surely we can scarcely pray if we have neglected anything that we can do—when we have done all that lies within our power as earnest-hearted Christian workers, then we must come to the Lord, Himself, for strength, and unto the God of our salvation for all power. This has been said so many times that when I say it, again, someone may reply, "That is a mere platitude." Just so—and the mischief is that the Church is beginning to think it is only a platitude—but if we all felt that the most important thing for the Church of Christ to do, after she has borne her testimony to the world, is to pray, what a different state of things there would soon be! But now you know what they are doing in far too many places—they push the Prayer Meeting up into a corner and if there is anything to be put off, they give up the Prayer Meeting! In some of our places of worship, we might search a long time for the Prayer Meeting. It is somewhere in the back settlements, down in some small room which is too big for it even then! People plead that they cannot get out to the Prayer Meeting—they will go out to a lecture or to spend the evening for pleasure—but they do not care to go out when it is "only a Prayer Meeting."

Just so and as long as that is the estimation in which professing Christians hold it, so long must we cease to expect showers of blessing from on high! The main thing is for the Church to pray! She knows that she is dependent upon her God—let her show it by crying day and night to Him that He would send a blessing. There is a big mill with all its spindles and all its workers. I think I see it as we speed along in the train through one of our Northern counties. It is all lit up, tonight, and many busy hands are at work. But where is the power that makes those spindles move? In that little shed outside, where there is a man with black hands, stirring the fire, and keeping up the pressure of steam. That is where the power is! And that is a picture of the Prayer Meeting. It is the source of the Church's energy and if public prayer is neglected, or if private prayer is slackened, or if family prayer is held back in any degree, we lose the power which brings the blessing—this will be acknowledged when we come to truly know that all the power is of God and that as we cannot command a drop of rain, but must leave it in the hands of God, so we cannot command an ounce of Grace—if Grace is to be so measured—it must come from God, and from God alone.

II. Now, secondly, dear Friends, notice in my text that, AS GOD GIVES RAIN, SO RAIN FALLS IRRESPECTIVE OF MEN. "Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water, or a path for the thunderbolt; to cause it to rain on the earth, where there is no one; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man?"

I daresay you have often thought it strange that it should rain out at sea where it cannot water a single furrow, or apparently benefit any human being. Is it not still more strange that the water should fall so abundantly on vast tracts of sand and on plains that as yet have never been trod by the foot of man, and on those lofty peaks, those virgin hills where a human being has never yet been found? Men have a notion that nothing is good for anything if it is not good for them, but they are very fool-

ish for thinking so. If what God does in Providence is good for nothing but for a rat, it is not unwise for Him to do it! He has other creatures to think of beside men and He thinks of them. The little fish in the sea and the birds of the air—and even the worms in the earth are remembered by the Most High and, sometimes, that weather which we say is so bad is only bad because it is bad for us—rebels against God. It may have been given especially for the birds and, perhaps, sometimes, God thinks that it is better to have weather that is good for birds than good for men, for He has to provide for us all and they, at least, have not sinned. And if He thinks of them, there is as much of mercy in the thought as when He thinks of us rebellious creatures. He makes it "to rain on the earth, where there is no one."

Now the parallel in Grace is this—that *God's Grace will come without any human observation.* If the Grace of God comes to some of us, thousands will see it, for they will mark the working of His Grace in our life and conversation. But there sits a dear friend, over yonder, so obscure that possibly only two or three will ever know anything that she does. Perhaps, my Brother, only half-a-dozen are affected by your influence. Do you not rejoice that God, who makes the rain to fall where there is no one, will make His Grace to come to you, though nobody, or, at most, only two or three, may see it? I have delighted sometimes to wander into the middle of a forest and get far away from all sound of the voices of fallen men—and then to spy out some little flower growing right among the big trees. The sun gets at it, somehow, for a few hours in the day, and in its golden beams that little flower rejoices. And as I have looked at it and seen its beauty, I have remembered the words of the poet—

"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,"

but I have not at all agreed with him when he added—

"And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

It is God's flower! God made it grow that He might look at it, Himself, and, therefore, its sweetness was not wasted, for God was there to appreciate and accept it! The most beautiful places in the world are, doubtless, places where men have never been. The most lovely gardens are those that God, Himself, keeps, where no Adam has been placed to till the soil. His trees, untouched by the axe, and unpruned by the knife, grow gloriously—"The trees of the Lord are full of sap. The cedars of Lebanon which He has planted." My heart has rejoiced as I have thought of God walking among the great trees of the far-off West—those mighty monarchs of the forest that seem to touch the stars—walking among them when nobody was there but Himself, looking at the works of His own hands and admiring what He had made. Well, now, if you happen to be a solitary person, quite alone, one who will never make a noise in the world for all that God does for you, never mind about that—He causes it to rain on the earth where there is no one—and your obscurity shall not keep back the blessing!

So, you see, rain comes without human observation. And it also comes *without human co-operation,* for it often rains "where there is no one." Therefore, no man helps God to send the rain. As to Grace, it, also, often comes where there is no man to bring it. When a person has not heard a

sermon, when he has been on the sea, far away from all means of Grace, yet God has caused it to rain upon him. There is here, tonight, I think, a Brother who left this country unimpressed by the Gospel, who, nevertheless, when near the shores of Australia, sat down and read a sermon which his wife had put into his box—and God met with him there! The Lord has many ways of proving that His Grace descends upon men without any help from them—and that He can send it where He pleases by ways of His own. If the ordinary means should seem to fail, He can cause it to rain "where there is no one."

Perhaps there is somebody here who is going right away from the usual means of Grace. Possibly, dear Friend, you are fretting to yourself as you think, "I shall never come to this place of worship again. Perhaps I may never hear the Gospel to my soul's comfort again." Suppose you are right away in the bush of Australia? God can send His Grace to you, there, just as easily as He can send it here! If you are going to the backwoods of America or Canada, do not be afraid—the Lord is at home there. If you have to settle down in a log hut and are miles from any meeting of Christian people—do not be dispirited or cast down, but, in your loneliness, sit and sing and let this be a part of your song, "He makes a way for the overflowing water, to cause it to rain on the earth, where there is no one; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man." Therefore be encouraged by this second thought.

III. I had many other things to say to you upon this point, but time fails, so I must notice, thirdly, that BOTH RAIN AND GRACE FALL WHERE WE MIGHT LEAST HAVE EXPECTED THEM. "To satisfy the desolate and waste ground."

Grace comes where there was no Grace before. Where all was desert and waste, there comes the rain. And where all was graceless and godless, there comes the Grace of God. *Grace comes where there is the greatest need of it.* Here was a dreadful place—it was waste—it was a wilderness yet the rain came there. And where there are men who feel themselves to be just as dead and barren as a desert, Grace will come even there! The rain comes to wildernesses and Grace can come to you, poor guilty Sinners! If you have nothing with which to entertain the Grace, Grace will bring its own company with it. It will come into your empty heart and make you one of the "people prepared for the Lord." Grace waits not for men, neither tarries for the sins of men. We call it Prevenient Grace because it comes before it is sought—and God bestows it on a people who are utterly undeserving of it.

Grace comes where, apparently, there is nothing to repay it for coming. When the rain falls on the wilderness, it seems as if no result could follow from its fall. What a mercy it is that when we have nothing to pay, God lavishes His mercy on us and, in due time, we repay Him in the way He expects. I do not suppose that many of you have ever seen the great steppes of Russia. I have been told that for thousands of miles they are like our London streets, without a single blade of anything green—a horrible desolation! Yet after the snow has gone and springtime comes in and summer, with its wonderful heat, that plain is covered with grass and with abundant flowers of the field. And the grass continues until it is

cut for use—and then the land returns to that same barren appearance which it wore before. It is amazing, is it not, that showers of rain and the warmth of the sun should produce vegetation where, apparently, there seemed to be none whatever?

Just so does the Grace of God come to a sinner's heart! It is all hard, dead, black, hopeless. But when the Grace comes, it brings life with it and suddenly there spring up in the man all manner of good works, holy words, gracious thoughts and everything that is sweet and pleasing in the sight of God! And what is best of all, it continues to produce a harvest that never dries up and the soil never returns to its former barrenness again! Therefore, Beloved, let us take heart concerning the Grace of God. If the rain comes where there seems to be no argument in favor of its coming, so may the Grace of God come to you who have no right to it—no expectation of it—no hope of it—no, are even filled with despair concerning it! While you are sitting here, the Lord can meet with you and save you! Be of good comfort—to you is the Gospel sent, saying, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Trust your guilty soul with Him and you, even you, shall receive the showers of love that come from God's right hand! There is nothing in the Covenant of Grace that shall be held back from you—even though you are the very worst and vilest one in this place—if you only trust the Savior. Though you may write yourself down as most surely lost and given up to barrenness, like the heath that is near unto burning, yet it shall not be so with you—God shall bless you and that right early.

"Oh, if He does!" says one, "I will bless His name." Then that is one reason why He will do it, that you may bless His name. I have often told you of one who said, "If God saves me, He shall never hear the last of it." Well, that is the sort of people He likes to save—people who, with glad heart and voice, will proclaim and proclaim again, and proclaim to all eternity that the Lord saved them—even them! Remember the text of last Sunday night, for it is just in the same key as the text of tonight—"He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty." [See Sermon #2582, Volume 44—*Alto and Bass—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org*] He has caused it "to rain on the earth where there is no one; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man; to satisfy the desolate and waste ground," for it is to these waste grounds, these desolate places, that God specially looks with favor. If you are great in your own esteem, He will make you little. But if you are little, He will make you great. If you live by your own power, you shall be slain. But if you are slain and dead beyond hope of recovery in yourself, you shall be made alive! You empty ones shall be filled and you filled ones shall be emptied. You that are up shall be down—and you that are down shall be lifted up, for God turns things upside down. And when He comes to work, He effects marvelous changes in the condition of the hearts of men.

IV. Now I close by noticing, in the fourth place, that RAIN, WHEN IT COMES, IS MOST VALUED BY LIFE, for we read in our text, that it comes "to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth."

You may water a dead post as long as you like, yet nothing will come of it. But the most tender, tiniest little herb that has a bud fast shut, knows when the rain comes and begins to develop its hidden power—and opens its bud to the rain and to the sun! That is why the Grace of God comes, "to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth." I hope that there is a good deal of budding life here. The Lord has looked upon you and has made you feel uneasy—that is a bud. Oh, that the uneasiness might open into full repentance! The Lord has looked upon you and He has given you desires. Oh, that the Grace of God may increase those desires till they shall open into resolution and determination! The Lord has sent the dew from on high upon your soul, dear Friend, and you are beginning to hope that there is salvation somewhere and, perhaps, for you. Oh, that the hope may open, like a bud that has been shut up—open into faith in Jesus Christ, so that you shall say, "I will trust in Him." All the buds everywhere are just now trying to get out into the sunshine. They seem bound up in gummy envelopes, but they are beginning to open in the sunshine. I like to sit under the fir trees and hear the crack of the opening caused by the heat of the sun. You can almost see the trees rejoicing that summertime is coming! So may you see young converts open when the Grace of God is displayed abundantly—they grow before your very eyes till, sometimes, you are astonished at what the Grace of God does, with wise prudence, but yet with a sweet readiness, upon the hearts of the sons of men!

How far have your buds developed? Have you begun to pray a little? Oh, that your prayer might be more intense! I hope that little bud of private prayer will grow till it comes to family prayer so that you can pray with your wife and children. You have been reading your Bible lately, have you? Oh, thank God for that! Now I hope that bud of Bible reading will open into the daily habit of feeding upon the Word of God. Go right through the Bible if you can. Pray to God to give you a solid knowledge of its contents that you may be rooted and grounded in what His Spirit teaches you there. Some of you have another sort of bud—you have been thinking of what you can do for Christ. You thought you were converted, but you have never done much for Christ. I do not use any whips, but sometimes I am tempted to take a good long one to some of those lazy folk who do nothing and yet hope to go to Heaven. One says, "I think, my dear Pastor, that I must try to do something for Christ." Well, that is a bud—may the Grace of God be so abundant that you will leave off trying and get actually to doing!

"How am I to serve God?" said one to me the other day. I answered, "My dear Brother, get at it. 'Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.' Don't come and ask me, for where there is so much to be done, the man is idle who asks, 'What am I to do?' Do the first thing that comes to hand!" If a soldier in battle saw that the enemy was winning the day, he would not be hesitating and asking, "Captain, what can I do?" He would kill the first fellow that came near—and so must you, in a spiritual sense. Do something for Christ. Oh, that this Church might begin to open all its buds! May every little one become a thousand, and every small one a great multitude, to the praise of the glory of the Grace of

God! O you little ones, you hidden ones, you timid ones, you trembling ones—the Grace of God is abundant! Open to receive it! See how the crocus, after having been long hidden beneath the soil, knows when the new year begins and, as soon as the sun smiles on the earth, it gently lifts up its golden cup—and is there anything more beautiful in all the world than the crocus cup when God fills that chalice with the light of Heaven? What a depth of wonderful brightness of color there is within it! All the crocus can do is to open itself—and that is all you can do—just stand and drink in God's light! Open yourself to the sweet influences of the Grace of God.

The fair lilies of the garden toil not, neither do they spin; but yet they glorify God. How they seem to stand still and just show what God can do with them! They just drink in the light and heat and then pour it all out again in silent, quiet beauty. Now you do the same! Let the purity of your life, like the purity of the lily, glorify the God who created it in you. So may His blessing rest upon you all, dear Friends, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Isaiah 4:8-20.

Verse 8. *But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, My friend.* Let us, for the time being, forget the people to whom this message was addressed, and see whether it might not be spoken to ourselves. Come, my Friend, are you truly God's servant? Do you delight to do His will and to walk in His ways? If so, then you are God's chosen, for, wherever there is the true spirit of obedience to the Lord, it is the result of His Grace, and Grace never comes except from the wellhead of electing love! If you are God's servant, you are God's chosen. Then see to it that you walk and live as one of the seed of Abraham, whom God calls, "My friend."

It was very touching, the other day, to notice how the Queen spoke of one who was her servant, but who had gained the friendship of his royal mistress. So the Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his Lord does: but I have called you friends." May we so faithfully serve Him that it will be fitting for the Lord to speak of us in all three of these terms—"You, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham My friend."

9. *You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called you from the chief men thereof, and said unto you, You are My servant; I have chosen you, and not cast you away.* May the Lord now say that to each one of you who are His servants! Especially may He say the latter part of it, "I have not cast you away"! Many times He might have done so if He had dealt with us according to our deeds. "Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord," is a prayer we ought often to put up, for, in that service, we are far from perfect. I think I speak for all sane Christians—I do not undertake to speak for certain insane ones that abound at this time—but I believe that all sane servants of the Lord confess that they are such

poor servants that their wonder is that they have not been dismissed from His service. Yet it is sweet to hear Him say, "I have chosen you, and not cast you away."

10. *Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God.* Oh, the riches of that word, "I am your God"! That is more than, "Your Friend, your Helper." "I am your God."

10. *I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you.* First, "I will give you strength, and then I will use My own strength on your behalf: 'I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you.'"

10. *Yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.* The poor child of God seems to cry, "Lord, You say, 'I will help you,' but I can hardly stand! I am such a babe, I have not yet learned to stand alone." "Well, then," says God, "I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." Are any of you afraid that you will slip right off your feet? Are you put in very perplexing positions, so that you hardly know which way to turn? Then rest on this sweet promise, "Yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness."

11. *Behold, all they that were incensed against you shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with you shall perish.* The Lord Jesus Christ will put to rout all the enemies of His people! Their sins and their sorrows, their foes and their woes, shall alike be scattered to the wind!

12. *You shall seek them, and shall not find them, even them that contended with you: they that war against you shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nothing.* You know how it happened to Pharaoh and all his hosts—the Israelites could not find them after the Lord had overthrown them in the Red Sea. The Psalmist sang, long afterwards, concerning the Egyptians who were drowned, "There was not one of them left." So shall it be with all those whom you now fear and dread—God shall appear and work such a deliverance for you that you shall wonder where your trouble is! It shall be drowned, utterly washed away, like the Egyptians whom the children of Israel saw no more.

13, 14. *For I the LORD your God will hold your right hand, saying unto you, Fear not; I will help you. Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the LORD, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.* You must not miss those charming words, dear Friends! Let me read them again. Some of you will want them, so do not miss them. There is some medicine here that you will need, maybe, before long—"Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

15. *Behold, I will make you as a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: you shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff.* You know the corn drag was made rough at the bottom, as though it had sharp teeth, and when it was drawn over the wheat after it was spread out on the threshing floor, the grain was separated from the chaff. So God tells His people, if they trust Him, that He will make them into a threshing instrument having teeth—and they shall thresh not ordinary harvests—but shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff! No task is too hard for God's

people to accomplish when God is with them! Difficulties vanish and their fears are driven before the wind when God strengthens them.

16. *You shall fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and you shall rejoice in the LORD, and shall glory in the Holy One of Israel.* Come, you that are drooping in spirit— here is God's promise to you that you shall overcome all your difficulties and then shall rejoice in God. "Oh," you say, "I could rejoice in God if He enabled me to do that!" Put the, "if," away, and believe that He is about to help you, and anticipate the victory He is going to give you by singing the song of faith!

17. *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst.* They have come to such a state that they cannot even tell their needs— they do not know how to speak to others about their grief, or even to describe it to themselves. "Their tongue fails for thirst." What then?

17. *I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.* "But, Lord, they could not speak! Did You not say, 'Their tongue fails'? Yet You say, 'I the Lord will hear them.'" It shows, dear Friends, that a groan is a prayer, a sigh is a prayer, and that even if we cannot get as far as to sigh or groan, our very hunger and thirst make up a prayer before God! "I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them."

18. *I will open rivers in high places.* That is an unusual place to find rivers, but God does strange things when He shows mercy to the poor and needy "I will open rivers in high places."

18. *And fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.* There shall be enough and to spare! There shall be an abundance of the water of which before they could not find a single drop! When God is gracious to a soul, He is gracious. When His mercy is made to enter a man's heart, then He pours floods upon him. No little Grace will God bestow, but endless Grace, and boundless Grace, "and crown that Grace with glory, too."

19, 20. *I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the cypress tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree. I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it.* May these gracious promises be fulfilled in you and me, that we may praise our faithful Covenant-keeping God forever and ever! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—103 (VERSION 2), 72 (SONG 2), 456.

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.

PLACE FOR THE WORD
NO. 2584

INTENDED
FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 21, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 8, 1883.

"My Word has no place in you."
John 8:37.

This was very plain speaking on the part of the Lord Jesus Christ. He could not only read the thoughts of these Jews, but He could also tell the source of them. He not only knew their feelings towards Himself, even before they expressed them, but He also knew why they had such feelings. Our Lord is not here, now, in bodily Presence, but He is here by His Spirit. He knows those who have received His Word, and He looks with gracious approval upon them. If you have given it entrance into your heart, thank Him for it and take care that you retain it—and that you permit it to influence your whole life. Let His Word be in you as salt to preserve you and as light first shining into you—and then, streaming from you—let it make your life a blessing to all those who are around you! My Master is glad as He looks upon everyone here who has received His Word. Precious is that coffer which holds the priceless treasure of the Word of Christ. Your body is precious to Him, your soul is precious to Him when He can see that sacred deposit of His own Word abiding within you!

But there are some here, I fear—no, in all honesty I must say that there are some here in whom the Word of God is not to be found. To them Christ says, "My Word has no place in you." Jesus knows your condition, my dear Hearer, if that is your case. He knows how often you have heard that Word and He knows what struggles it has cost you to keep that Word from entering your heart! He knows with what determination you have refused to receive that Truth of God which has come from God to you. I would like, if I could, to talk very simply and in a very friendly and homely manner to every person here who has not received God's Word. And I would wish to speak so that I should not be understood to be preaching to this great mass of people so much as to be talking to individuals, one by one, lovingly anxious that any here who have not Christ's Word in them may not go out of this building until it has a place in their hearts.

I. I will begin by asking this question—WHAT PLACE OUGHT THE WORD OF GOD HAVE IN MEN'S HEARTS? Jesus said to these Jews, "My

Word has no place in you." What place ought the Word of God have in our hearts?

First, it ought to have an *inside place.* Many persons will give it an outside place. "The Word of God," says one—"yes, of course I have it in my house. The Word of God—if you come home with me, you will find that I have a splendid copy of the Bible in my best room, well bound and capitally illustrated!" Another says, "I have a Bible in almost every room of my house. I think there is one in every room, I like to see it there." Yes, that is very proper and right, but still, the place for God's Word is not an outside place, but an inside place! It is infinitely better to have it hidden in your heart than it is to have many copies of it laid among the furniture of your house. It may be that your having the Word of God so plentifully at home may *increase* your damnation rather than lead to your salvation! You had the Lamp of Life, but you made a dark lantern of it—you shut in the light and never used it for any practical purpose. My dear Hearers, you who pay an outward reverence to that Word and say that it is undoubtedly Inspired, and praise and extol it—if, at the same time, believing it to be true, you do not yield yourself up to its power, may God have mercy upon you and lead you to repent of your sin! The proper place for the Word is inside, in your heart—have you got it hidden there?

Next, it ought to have *a place of high honor.* God's Word in a man ought to be in the best part of that man, not merely in the store room of his memory, but in the drawing room of his enjoyments, in the parlor where it will talk with him. If the human mind is compared to a palace, the proper place for Christ's Word is on the throne! All the writings of men put together cannot equal in value one single chapter of the Bible! Their words, at best, are but gold-leaf. But God's Word is bullion! Here you have pearls that are altogether priceless, such as can never be found elsewhere. If the Word of Christ dwells in you, let it dwell in you richly—let it be honored and reverenced beyond all the words of men—however excellent those words may be.

Give the Word of Christ an inside place and a place of honor.

Next, give it *a place of trust.* Let it cover you as the hen covers her chickens with her wings. Let it surround you as the ramparts surround the city and protect it from the invader. Give yourself up to God's Truth as one trusts himself in a lifeboat, hoping to be safely landed. Have no confidence but in the Word of the Master. If you stand partly on God's Word and partly on man's word, you will have one foot on a rock and the other foot upon quicksand—and that one foot upon the quicksand will be your ruin! "Trust you in the Lord forever," for His Word is faithful, true and steadfast. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His Word shall never pass away! Give, then, to that Word, all your confidence! Repose upon it for it is Infallible and unchangeable.

Further, if the Word of God is in you, give it *a place of rule.* Let it be the master of your thoughts, ruling your understanding—the master of your affections, curbing your passions and exciting holy desires in you. Let it be the master of your words. Let all sinful and even all *idle* words

be banished from your lips! Let your speech be seasoned with the salt of Revelation. Let the Word of the Lord be the master of your action. "Whatever He says to you, do it." If Christ forbids you to do anything, let it be avoided with all the energy of your spirit. Put the Scripture, the Inspired Word—put Christ, the Incarnate Word, Himself, upon the throne of your whole being and surrender yourself to Him, without attempting to make any terms or conditions!

The Word of God ought also to have in *us a place of love.* "O how love I Your Law," said David. God's Word is never truly known till it is loved. "I hate vain thoughts, but Your Law do I love," said David. He esteemed it more than gold, yes, than much fine gold. In religion, to love is to know—I wish it were always true that to know is to love. When we love the Word and it saturates our whole being so that we cannot relinquish it, but take an intense delight in it, and have a fervent affection for every part of it—then it is that we put the Word of God into the place it ought to occupy—not in the attic of the brain, but in the parlor of the heart, and there let it take up its permanent abode!

That last remark suggests that the Word of Christ ought to have *a permanent place* in us—it ought never to be forgotten. We should not be followers of Christ, today, and followers of somebody else, tomorrow. No! Let the Word that Christ has spoken have an eternal effect upon our immortal nature and a perpetual abiding place within our heart. God grant that it may be so intertwined with the very warp and woof of our being that it would be impossible to take it from us without destroying our very selves! May our life prove that the Living Word is within us, quickening us and causing us to live with the life of God!

Now, dear Friends, it is for a special reason that I have insisted upon this point, that the Word of God should have its rightful place in us. I am no Prophet, nor the son of a Prophet, yet I perceive that there is coming upon the world a time of most unusual trial. I believe that within the next few years we shall hear of all sorts of fanaticism and folly such as you have hardly imagined. There will probably arise false christs and false prophets of every kind—and you will be bid to believe in this, and to follow that, and to obey the other. I charge you, by the living God, have no master but Christ and have no book but the Bible to be your Infallible Guide! Now, soldiers, the watchword for today is, "Stand fast." You who are but babes must grow, or else you will be swept off your feet in the cyclones of excitement that have already begun! Be no longer children, leaping over the hedge to seek for every nest that silly birds may build. Keep to the King's Highway and follow Christ! And he that comes to you, though he seems a saint, transparent as crystal and bright as the sun, turn from him if he speaks to you any other thing than this Word of Christ, this permanent, perpetual Word which cannot be shaped or changed! Stand on this solid Rock and when the hurly-burly is over and when brains shall cease to swim, you will have cause to rejoice in your steadfastness! There are swift currents, now, that strain every ship and compel the mariner to put on all steam even to hold his own against

them—and blessed shall he be who is not carried away by them. Blessed shall be the brave sentinel of Christ who stood still in his watchtower though the morning was long in coming, and who watched through the dreary night with steadfast expectation that it would come—and with this resolve that whether it did come or did not come—he would stand where His Master put him!

As for me, I care not what men invent, or what they deny—the Truth which I have learned from the Scriptures, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit—is the Truth of God by which I shall stand so long as there is breath in my body! And with Luther I say I can do no other. To this I must stand! Let those who will do otherwise, follow after novelties till they weary of them.

This much have I spoken concerning the place which God's Word ought to have in every man's heart.

II. Now give me your heart, Friend. Let me have a good grip of it while I try to answer a second question—WHY HAS THAT WORD NO PLACE IN MANY HEARTS?

"Oh!" says one, *"I am so very busy that I cannot admit it."* My dear Friend, I hope you will alter that answer. I heard, some time ago, of one who, when anyone spoke to him about religion, always used to reply, "You see, I am so very busy that I cannot attend to it." It happened, one morning, that he saw in the paper that a fellow-tradesman had suddenly died and, as he read the paragraph, he said to his wife, "I don't know how old So-and-So found time to die! I have such a deal to do that I could not afford time to die." He staggered as he went out of the room and fell across the threshold dead within five minutes after having uttered that wicked speech! I have no doubt that the same thing has happened elsewhere. You may fancy that you are too busy to think of the affairs of your soul, yet you may be taken away, all of a sudden, from the midst of your occupations and then what will those gains benefit you? It may be printed in *The Illustrated London News* that you died worth so many thousands of pounds, but will it not be a great lie? When a rich man dies, what is he worth? He has, perhaps, a lead coffin, or the undertaker may use more expensive wood than for a poor man. Granted there might be a greater display at the funeral and, very often, there is more squabbling with his family over what he has left!

I have often thought that the poor man's funeral has much more sorrow in it, much more that could be desired and spoken of with pleasure than the funeral of the man who seeks to be immensely rich. You know what happens when poor Hedge dies. His wife weeps, for he was the mainstay of the household, the bread-winner of the family. The poor woman wonders how he is to be buried. Well, there is his daughter, Mary—she is a domestic and she gets about 15 pounds a year for wages. She has not much to spare, but she makes up her mind that her father shall not be buried by the parish, so she finds a little of the money that is needed. There is the eldest son. He has eight children of his own and he has only the wages of an agricultural laborer—but he pinches so that he

may subscribe his sovereign towards the expense. They all feel what they give—they are made to feel it—and they all sincerely mourn and lament. And though there is not a sixpence to divide between them, yet with what honor and with what love they lay their father in the silent tomb!

On the other hand, you know how it often is with rich people—the best part of the funeral is when the will is read. And I have more than once heard some such remark as this—"That man was very much like a hog—no good to anybody while he lived, but he will make some fine sides of bacon when he is cut up." Is it worth while for a man to fling his soul away merely that he may get so much together that he cannot use, and which will very likely be misused by those who inherit it? I say that "the game is not worth the candle." My dear Friend, if this is the game you have been playing, give it up at once, and say, "I must have time. I will have time, come what may, to seek the salvation of my soul, for above all else I want to make sure of life eternal." You will not again say that you are too busy to receive Christ's Word, will you?

Another says, "You ask me why the Word of Christ is not abiding in me? I think it is because—." No, you would not like to say it, so I will say it for you—it is *because there is no particular novelty about it.* You like a brand-new gospel, do you not? Well, there are plenty of people, nowadays, who supply that worthless article. We get a new sect about every month and some new-fashioned gospel invented almost every week! Away they go after something fresh. First, North, then, South. Then, East, then, West. "Hurrah! We have found the very thing! Sound the timbrels, beat the drums, blow the trumpets!" Just so, but "the Kingdom of God comes not with observation." Remember what was written concerning Christ hundreds of years before He came to earth? "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth." If the gospel that men teach is new, it is not true, for there is nothing that can be new and true! The Truth of God is old as the everlasting hills. Therefore, dear Friends, be not touched with that Athenian madness of always seeking after some new thing! Did you ever hear of new gold? To all intents and purposes, all gold that is worth having is old. Men can make what they call pearls, sapphires and diamonds—but they are paste gems and utterly valueless. It is just the same with the doctrines made by men—they are not according to the eternal Word of God and, therefore, they are not worth a penny a cartload! Do not be so foolish as to reject Christ's Word because it is ancient—that is the very reason why you should receive it and retain it in your memory and in your heart.

Shall I suggest that there are some who do not receive Christ's Word *because they are listening to man's word?* If you know anybody who is equal to my Master, hear him! If you know anybody who is superior to Christ, hear him! As for me, He is the one and the only Teacher of the Truth of God and at His feet I reverently and humbly sit. All other teachers whom I have ever heard of, or met with, so far as they speak as He

does, are worthy of attention. But whenever their teaching differs from His, on that point they are worthy of no regard whatever! Did you say that such-and-such a thing is believed by you because you found it in Calvin's *Institutes?* I am a Calvinist and a lover of that grand man's memory and doctrine—but I believe nothing merely *because Calvin taught it*—but because I have found his teaching in the Word of God. "Oh, but the Prayer Book says such-and-such!" It may do so, but, I pray you, believe nothing because it is there unless it can also be found in Holy Scripture! "But such-and-such things were in the Minutes of Mr. Wesley's Conference." If they are according to Scripture, let them stand! But if they are not, who was Mr. Wesley that we should receive his teaching? "Oh, but the archbishops have said it!" And what are all the archbishops piled together from the days of the first archbishop until now, wherein they have differed from the Word of God? No, my Friend, do not fill your brain with other people's teaching—if you would be right, turn all else out and come and say—"The Word of Christ for me! The Word of Christ for me!" If I have any influence over you and if you are ever inclined to believe a thing simply because I say it, I charge you, throw away such superstition and test all that I say by the Word of God. The real weight of truth consists not in what one man says, or in what another man says—the weight, the power, the substance lies in what Christ has said—that, and that alone, is the Truth of God.

I think I hear another say, "I have not received Christ's Word for *it seems to me to be too spiritual, too holy."* We can never deny that it is holy and spiritual, but, my Friend, think that matter over and withdraw those words you just uttered. Can anything be too spiritual to come from God, or too holy to bring us back to God? Let those characteristics of the Word of God charm you to Christ and not drive you away from Him!

"Oh, but," someone says, "if I were to believe Christ's Word, *it would be very cold comfort to me,* and it would rob me of many of my present enjoyments." Yes, if those enjoyments would rob you of your soul, but not else. There is no pleasure denied to me, as a Christian, except such pleasure as would be no pleasure to me as a Christian! The moment a man's mind takes in Christ's Word and is saturated with Christ's Spirit, he finds a pleasure only in that which is good—while that which is deluding, that which is degrading, that which is depraving, becomes a misery to him. Can anyone find comfort in Christ's Word? Ask the sick who can lie on their beds and sing! Is there comfort in Christ's Word? Ask the aged who, tottering on their staff in the midst of many infirmities, are taught a holy patience! Ask the dying who, as they gasp out their life, yet shout of victory, their faces beaming with the light of the Glory which is opening up before them! If you want real joy, find it in Christ's Word, and no longer say that it has no place in you!

Let me give you a very special squeeze of the hand and whisper in your ear that I am afraid the reason why God's Word has no place in your heart is that *you are not very much in earnest.* You are only like a butterfly—you have not come to real living yet—you are sporting, playing,

trifling. Oh, that you might soon find life in earnest and think in earnest about eternity! Then, but not till then, will you seek to lay hold on Christ.

May I also whisper to you very softly and ask, "Is not the reason why you have not received Christ's Word *because you have some favorite sin?* I have known men who could not be Christians and they argued very plausibly about the matter, but the real hindrance was that they had another house besides their own. I have known some men who could not believe in Jesus Christ for one very sufficient reason—namely, that they believed too much in the bottle. You know that a man cannot be a Believer in the Savior when he is devotedly attached to the god Bacchus! And I have known some to get very much enraged against the Truth of God and the one who preached it when the reason has been that their mode of conducting business did not square with the Gospel. Their yard measure was short of 36 inches—and when they began to count up to a hundred, it was very difficult for them to get beyond eighty-five! A "dozen" did not mean twelve, and a gross—well, I do not know how grossly short their "gross" fell.

There are all sorts of tricks of trade and a man who practices them says, "Well, you know, I am not strait-laced." No, Sir, nobody ever thought that you were. "Oh, but I am not going to be one of your precise people!" No, I know you are not. We really would not malign you so much as to suppose that you were going to be precise, like the Puritans, for instance. You, also, are among those who like a broad theology. Yes, I know, you sometimes are unable to get home at night because the pavement is so narrow. I understand you perfectly well. It is for this reason that many do not receive Christ's Word—because there is some pet sin of their own that they do not like to have interfered with and, therefore, Christ and His Word are shut out of their heart.

Shall I tell you one thing more? Very possibly you do not receive Christ's Word *because you need to be made a new man before you will do so*. The carnal man receives not the things that are of God. There is a hard slab of rock in your heart and when the good Seed falls upon it, the birds soon take it away. What you need, Friends, is to have that rock broken up, dissolved, changed into pliable earth. Can I do that for you? I was going to say, I wish I could, but I cannot. Only the Eternal Spirit, who can quicken the dead, can renew you in the spirit of your mind. Cry unto God that this great miracle may be worked—you will never receive the Word until it is. This is the message for you, "You must be born again." *Must,* mark you. It is not *may*—"you *must*—you *must* be born again," for until you are born again, this living and incorruptible Seed of the Word of God will never get into your hearts. May the Holy Spirit speedily work the miracle of regeneration in your spirit!

III. I have finished when I have tried to answer very briefly my third question—IF YOU HAVE NOT THE WORD OF CHRIST IN YOU, WHAT WILL COME OF IT?

Something came to the Jews because they rejected Christ's Word. They sought to kill Christ because His Word had no place in them. I hope

that will not happen to you, Friends, but I have witnessed it in others. I have seen the child of godly parents quench conscience and resist the Spirit. I have seen many a young man, full of fair promises, but refusing to be decided for Christ and, all of a sudden, I have found him a skeptic, seen him grow into an infidel and seen him develop into a blasphemer. I have known him to become a most violent antagonist to the Gospel. "Is your servant a dog," says one, "that he should do this thing?" No, it may be that you are not a dog, but there is enough of the dog spirit in you to do it. If you are dog enough to turn away from Christ, you will yet be dog enough to howl at His heels. Beware of resisting the Spirit of God and trifling with conscience, for there is nothing worse! A man may play on the edge of a precipice and he may do it safely for many a day, but one of these days he will make a fatal slip. Mind what you are doing, I pray you! Never let it be said of you, as Christ said to these Jews, "You seek to kill Me because My Word has no place in you."

Or, if that shall not be the case with you, I will tell you what may happen. Christ may cease speaking to you. "I shall not leave off going to Chapel," says one. No, perhaps not, but the Gospel may no longer have any voice to you. Possibly it has already less power over you than it once had—you used to shiver in your shoes when you heard the Truth of God! You have gone out of this place trembling under the Word—but you do not do so now. I hope it is not because I do not preach as earnestly as I did, but if I do preach as earnestly and as faithfully as ever, then what is happening to you? Why, you are getting deaf ears and a callous, hardened heart—and these are the commencement of that most awful of all conditions into which men slide when God says to His messengers, "Go and tell this people, Hear you, indeed, but understand not; and see you, indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." It is a terrible thing when even the Gospel becomes the savor of death unto death to those who would not permit it to be the savor of life unto life to them! Before Christ packs up His wares and goes His way because you would not have His goods, ask Him to let you buy them of Him. His terms will not hurt you—He sells His precious things "without money and without price." Urgently require at His hands that before He turns His back on you, you may yield to Him and be saved!

And, remember, once more, that if the Word of God has no place in us, *it will exist somewhere.* Down came the Word of God to a man, the other night, and it knocked very hard at his heart, but the door was shut. The Word knocked again, and again, and again. Still the door was shut and the Word went back to Him who sent it and it stayed there. How many times have you heard the Gospel, my Friend? Could you count up the number of faithful sermons that have been preached in your hearing? Do you know how many earnest entreaties from friends have been addressed to you in vain? You shut them out, but they all went back and there they are—at the Throne of God! And when you come there, at last, and your

trial takes place, you will be surprised to find all those messages and messengers present at the last grand assize to bear witness against you! Oh, let it not be so, I pray you! Will you not believe in Jesus Christ even now? Will you not turn to Him and live this very hour? Will you not leave your sins and trust the Savior? Will you not go to Him and, with a broken heart, confess that you need Him? He may be found of those who seek Him! Then, will you not seek Him now? If not, remember this scene—these crowded galleries, this area, these thousands of eyes—I call upon all to witness against you, in that day, that this night I preached Christ to you and bade you live—and if you will not, if you prefer moral and eternal suicide—I call this building, every beam and every stone in it, and every person here to witness that I have told you of the way of salvation, and implored you to run in it! They shall be swift witnesses against you to condemn you if you will not repent! Turn you, turn you, why will you die? Trust the Savior! Trust Him, now, and live forever! God grant that it may be so, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 8:28-59.

Verse 28. *Then said Jesus unto them.*—That is, to the Jews who were questioning and opposing Him.

28. *When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall you know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father has taught Me, I speak these things.* Blessed be God, there were many, after the crucifixion of Christ, who did believe in Him! Yet, alas, in others, the blindness of heart continued and they would not see the Messiah in Him who was crucified. We, who believe in the uplifted Savior, can see the Father in the Son and, to us, faith has become a most blessed thing—and we know that He does nothing of Himself and, that as the Father has taught Him, so He speaks.

29. *And He that sent Me is with Me.* I commend that short sentence to all my Master's servants, for there is great comfort in it. Your Lord could say this and so can you if you are truly employed in His service—"He that sent me is with me."

29. *The Father has not left Me alone.* There is another precious motto for you. Jesus could truly say, "The Father has not left Me alone" and, as He did not leave His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, so He will not leave *any* of His children.

29. *For I do always those things that please Him.* Let us labor earnestly to be able to say that! If there is anything which would not please God, let us have nothing to do with it. If it would not please God, it ought not to please us. Blessed shall that servant of the Lord be who can sincerely say, "I do always those things that please Him."

30-32. *As He spoke these words, many believed on Him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If you continue in My word, then are you My disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth*

shall make you free. There is such a thing as a temporary faith—beware of it, I beseech you. Men appear to believe in Christ for a little while, like that Seed which was sown upon the rock, which speedily sprang up and, just as quickly, withered away. God-given faith is not temporary, but permanent. "If you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples indeed." God gives us the faith which is able to endure the fire of persecution and which continues steadfast even when exposed to the evil example of an ungodly world. "He that endures to the end shall be saved." But temporary faith brings only delusion and ends in destruction.

33, 34. *They answered Him, We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how say You, You shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin.* Depend upon it, acts of sin breed habits of sin, and habits are like the chains which slaves wear. How many there are who are bound to their lusts with many shackles and fetters! Once they seemed to enjoy the sin and to hold it in subjection, but now it has bound them and they cannot escape from it.

35, 36. *And the servant abides not in the house forever: but the Son abides always. If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.* If He sets you free from sin, you will never go back to its slavery! There is no emancipation like that which Jesus brings, for it is eternal! When He snaps the fetter, He sets the Believer free forever.

37, 38. *1 know that you are Abraham's seed; but you seek to kill Me because My word has no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father.* It is a common characteristic of children to tell what they see. What they witness at home, they are sure to tell abroad. If you are a child of God, you will act and speak like your Father does. And if you are a child of the devil, you will act and speak like he. Our parentage may be discovered by our acts and our words—"I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father."

39. *They answered and said unto Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus said unto them, If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.* "That is, if you were the true spiritual children of faithful Abraham, you would act as he did."

40-42. *But now you seek to kill Me, a Man that has told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. You do the deeds of your father. Then said they to Him, We are 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 proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me.* If any man has a right idea of God and really loves God, if he will study the Character of Christ, he will see that Christ is the very image of God in human flesh—and he will fall in love with Christ. That result is inevitable! Men form wrong ideas of God and then, when they read the life of Christ, they see no likeness between the Christ and their conception of God—nor is there any! But if they would take their idea of God from God's own Word, then they would see that in the

Person of the Man of Nazareth, the Divine Character truly shines out, though it is toned down so as to meet the human eyes without the excessive glare that would blind them. But it is the same Light of Light, the same Love of Love, the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, "for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." He is the express Image of God and he who truly knows God will know that Christ is also God, for Father and Son are One.

43-47. *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 you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, you believe Me not. Which of you convicts Me of sin! And if say the truth, why do you not believe Me? He that is of God hears God's Words: you therefore hear them not, because you are not of God.* What a wonderful Character was the Character of Christ! We get a strange light cast upon it as we read this dialog in which He endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself. My Brothers and Sisters, in Christ there is all the tenderness of a woman, but do not think that He is effeminate, far from it! What masculine force, what vigor, what power there is in Him! There are some people who, if we speak plainly against error, tell us that we are uncharitable and that we have not the spirit of Christ. Is it so? Did there ever fall from any lips more burning words than those which we find here, when He is brought into conflict with His foes? The fact is, He is meek and lowly, but He is most courageous! He is genial and kind, but He is honest and true! He speaks with suavity and gentleness, but, at the same time, there is great force about every expression that He uses. He does not mince matters when He is dealing with sin! There is no velvet on His lips—He utters no honeyed phrases. Naked Truths of God flash like a scimitar from its scabbard when He has to deal with those who oppose it! "Because I tell you the truth, you believe Me not. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do you not believe Me? He that is of God hears God's Words: you, therefore, hear them not, because you are not of God."

48. *Then answered the Jews, and said unto Him, Say we not well that You are a Samaritan, and have a devil?* You know this form of answer. It is an old trick, when there is no case—abuse the plaintiff! So, when there is no answer to what Christ has said, call Him a Samaritan and say that He has a devil.

49-51. *Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. And I seek not My own glory: there is One that seeks and judges. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keeps My saying, he shall never see death.* What glorious Gospel brilliance Christ suddenly flashes upon these men! He promises even to *them* that if they will keep His saying, they shall live forever, they shall be partakers of an eternal, unquenchable life! It might have seemed to us to be like casting pearls

before swine to proclaim that great Truth of God to such hearers—but our Master's infinite wisdom does not permit us to think so.

52-56. *Then said the Jews unto Him, Now we know that You have a devil. Abraham is dead, and the Prophets; and You say, If a man keeps My saying, he shall never taste of death. Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the Prophets are dead: whom do You make Yourself out to be? Jesus answered, If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing: it is My Father that honors Me; of whom you say, that He is your God: yet you have not known Him, but I know Him: and if I should say, I know Him not, I should be a liar like you: but I know Him, and keep His saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and He saw it, and was glad.* He will not answer their questions, for they do not ask that they may learn. They ask that they may quibble. So He multiplies His riddles. He lets the light blind them yet more! Now He speaks, not so much of the undying life of Believers, as of His own eternal Existence, long before the Prophets and Abraham of whom they had spoken.

57, 58. *Then said the Jews 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.* Before there was any Abraham, there was this glorious Christ of ours existing as the Eternal I AM, in all the infinity of His Glory! Now comes a thoroughly characteristic Jewish answer.

59. *Then took they up stones to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them and so passed by.* They believed that He claimed to be God, as He certainly did, and, therefore, they tried to stone Him. And there is no foothold for those who say that Christ was a very good Man, but only a Man. If He was not the Son of God, He was not a good Man, for no good man would have left upon his followers, and upon his foes, too, the impression that he claimed to be God if he were not! And no good man could have claimed to be God if he were not really so. Rank Jesus Christ either among the grossest of impostors, or else as the Son of God—one or the other! There is no halting-piece between the two. Blessed be Your name, O Son of Mary, You are also the Son of the Highest and, as such, we worship and adore You!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 166, 434, 478.

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

SPIRITUAL GLEANING
NO. 2585

INTENDED
FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 28, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON AN AUTUMN EVENING, IN THE YEAR 1856.

"Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not."
Ruth 2:15.

OUR country cousins have been engaged recently in harvest occupations and most of them understand what is meant by gleaning. Perhaps they are not, all of them, so wise as to understand the heavenly art of *spiritual* gleaning. That is the subject which I have chosen for our meditation on this occasion—my attention having been called to it while I have been riding along through the country and, as I like to improve the seasons of the year as they come and go, I shall give you a few homely remarks with regard to spiritual gleaning. In the first place, we shall observe that there is *a great Husbandman.* It was Boaz in this case. It is our Heavenly Father who is the Husbandman in the other case. Secondly, we shall notice *a humble gleaner.* It was Ruth in this instance. It is every Believer who is represented by her—at least we shall so consider the subject. And, in the third place, here is *a very gracious permission given*—"Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not."

I. In the first place, then, we will consider something concerning THE GREAT HUSBANDMAN—GOD.

The God of the whole earth is a great Husbandman. In fact, all farming operations are really dependent on Him. Man may plow the soil and he may sow the seed, but God alone gives the increase. It is He that sends the clouds and the sunshine, it is He that directs the winds and the rain and so, by various processes of Nature, He brings forth the food for man. All the farming, however, which God does, He does for the benefit of others and never for Himself. He has no need of any of those things which are so necessary for us. Remember how He spoke to Israel of old?—"I will take no bullock out of your house, no he goats out of your folds. For every beast of the forest is Mine and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof." All things are God's and all He does in Creation, all the works of His Providence, are not done for Himself, but for His creatures, out of the benevolence of His loving heart.

And in spiritual matters, also, God is a great Husbandman. And there, too, all His works are done for His people, that they may be fed and satisfied, as with marrow and fatness. Permit me, then, to refer you to the great Gospel fields which our Heavenly Father farms for the good of His

children. There is a great variety of them, but they are all on good soil, for the words of Moses are true of the spiritual Israel—"The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew." God, as the great spiritual Husbandman, has many fields, and they are all fertile, and there is always an abundant harvest to be reaped in them.

One field is called *Doctrine field.* Oh, what large sheaves of blessed corn are to be found there! He who does but glean in it will find very much spiritual nutriment. There is the great sheaf of Election, full, indeed, of heavy ears of corn like Pharaoh saw in his first dream, "fat and good." There is the great sheaf of Preservation, wherein it is promised to us that the work that God has begun He will assuredly complete. And if we have not faith enough to partake of either of these sheaves, there is the most blessed sheaf of all—yes, it is many sheaves in one—the sheaf of Redemption by the blood of Christ. Many a poor soul who could not feed on electing love, has found satisfaction in the blood of Jesus. He could sit down and rejoice that Redemption is finished and that for every penitent soul there is provided a great Atonement whereby He is reconciled to God.

I cannot stop to tell you of all the sheaves in the Doctrine field. Some say there are only five. I believe the five great Doctrines of Calvinism are, in some degree, a summary of the rest—they are distinctive points wherein we differ from those who "have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." But there are many more Doctrines beside these five—and all are, alike, precious and all are, alike, valuable to the true Believer's soul—for he can feed upon them to his heart's content.

I wonder why it is that some of our ministers are so particular about locking the gates of this Doctrine field? They do not like God's people to get in. I believe it is because they are afraid Jeshurun would wax fat and kick if he had too much food. At least that is what I must be charitable enough to suppose! I fear that many are like the huge corn monopolist—they buy the Doctrine of Election, but keep it to themselves. They believe it is true, yet they never preach it! They say that all the distinguishing Doctrines of Grace are true, but they never proclaim them to others. There are Particular Baptists who are as sound in doctrine as any of us, but, unfortunately, they never make any sound about it—and though they are very sound when alone, they are very unsound when they come into their pulpits, for they never preach Doctrine there! I say, swing the gate wide open and come in, all you children of God! I am sure there are no poisonous weeds in my Master's field! If the Doctrine is a true one, it cannot hurt the child of God. And so, as it is the Truth of God, you may feast upon it till your soul is satisfied and no harm will come of it! The idea of reserve in preaching—keeping back some Doctrines because they are not fit to be preached—I will repeat what I have said before—it is a piece of most abominable impudence on the part of man to say that anything which God has revealed is unfit to be preached! If it is unfit to be preached, I am sure the Almighty would never have revealed it to us. No, like the old man described by Solomon, these preachers who do not proclaim good, sound Doctrine, are "afraid of that which is high." It is a mark

of their senility that they fear to talk of these great things! God was not afraid to write them and we, therefore, ought not to be afraid to preach them! The Doctrine field is a glorious field, Beloved—go into it often and glean—you may find, there, many a bushel of the finest wheat every day!

Then, next, God has a field called *Promise field.* On that I need not dwell, for many of you have often been there. But let us just take an ear or two out of one of the sheaves and show them to you, that you may be tempted to go into the field to glean more for yourselves. Here is one—"The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you." There is a heavy ear for you! Now for another—"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." Here is another—it has a short stalk, but there is a great deal of corn in it—"My Grace is sufficient for you." Here is another. "Fear you not, for I am with you." Here is another one. "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. 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 also be." There is the promise of Christ's glorious Second Coming and is not that a heavy ear of wheat for the Lord's children to pick up? Yes, Beloved, we can say of the Promise field what cannot be said of any farmer's field in England, namely, that it is so rich a field it cannot be richer! And it has so many ears of corn in it that you could not put in another one. As the poet sings—

"How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He has said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

Go and glean in that field, Christian! It is all your own, every ear of it! Pull great handfuls out of the sheaves, if you like, for you are truly welcome to all you can find!

Then there is *Ordinance field.* A great deal of corn grows in that field. One part of it reminds us of the ordinance of Believers' Baptism and, verily, God's children are greatly profited even by the sight of the Baptism of others! It comforts and cheers them—and helps them to renew their own dedication vow to the Lord Most High. But I must not detain you long in this field, though it is, to many of us, a very hallowed spot. Some of my friends never go into this field at all, it is too damp a soil for them—and though the corn is very fine and very high, they are afraid to go there. Let us leave that part of the field and pass on to the place of Communion. Oh, it is sweet, Divinely sweet, to sit at the Table of our Lord, to eat the bread and drink the wine! What rich dainties are provided for us there! Has not Jesus often given us, there, "the kisses of His mouth," and have we not, there, tasted His love and proved it to be "better than wine"? Beloved, go into the Ordinance field! Walk in the ordinances of the Lord, blameless, and do not despise either of them. Keep His

Commandments, for so will you find a great reward and so will He fill your souls with marrow and fatness!

But God has one field on a hill which is as rich as any of the others! And, indeed, you cannot really and truly go into any of the other fields unless you go through this one, for the road to the other fields lies through this one, which is called *the field of fellowship and communion with Christ.* Ah, that is the field to glean in! Some of you have only run through it, you have not stopped in it. But he who]mows how to abide in it and to walk about it, never loses anything, but gains much. Beloved, it is only in proportion as we hold fellowship with Christ and commune with Him, that either ordinances, or Doctrines, or promises can profit us. All those other things are dry and barren unless we have entered into the love of Christ, unless we have realized our union with Him, unless we have a sympathy with His heart, unless we bear His likeness, unless we dwell continually with Him, feel His love and are ravished with His delights. I am sorry to say that few Christians think as much as they ought of this field—it is enough for them to be sound in doctrine and tolerably correct in practice—they do not think as much as they should about holding fellowship with Christ. I am sure, if they did, there would not be half so many evil tempers as there are, nor half so much pride and not a tenth so much sloth if our Brothers and Sisters went into that field more often! Oh, it is a blessed one! There is no field like that one! You may go into it and revel in delights, for it is full of everything good that the heart can wish, or the soul imagine, or the mind conceive! Blessed, blessed field is that! And God leaves the gates of that field wide open for every Believer!

Children of God, go into all these fields. Do not despise any of them, but go and glean in them all, for there is the richest gleaning in all creation!

II. Now, in the second place, we have to think and speak of A HUMBLE GLEANER. Ruth was a gleaner and she may serve as an illustration of what every Believer should be in the fields of God.

He should be a gleaner, and he *may take a whole sheaf home if he likes.* He may be something more than a gleaner if he can be, but I use the figure of a gleaner because I believe that is the most a Christian ever is. Some may ask, "Why does not the Christian go and reap all the field and take all the corn home with him?" So he may, if he can. If he likes to take a whole sheaf on his back and go home with it, he may do so. And if he will bring a great wagon and carry away all there is in the field, he may have it all! But, generally, our faith is so small that we can only glean—we take away but a little of the blessing which God has prepared so abundantly. And though, sometimes faith does take and enjoy much, yet, when we compare it with what there is to be enjoyed, a gleaner is the true picture of faith—but more especially of little faith. All it can do is to glean—it cannot cart the wheat home, or carry a sheaf on its shoulders—it can only take it up, ear by ear.

Again, I may remark, that *the gleaner, in her business, has to endure much toil and fatigue.* She rises early in the morning and trudges off to a field. If that is shut, she trudges to another. And if that one is closed, or the corn has all been gleaned, she goes to another. All day long, though

the sun is shining on her, except when she sits down under a tree to rest and refresh herself a little, she still goes on stooping and gathering up her ears of corn. And she returns not home till nightfall, for she desires, if the field is good, to pick up all she can in the day, and she would not like to go back unless her arms were full of the rich corn she so much desires to find.

Beloved, so let it be with every Believer! Let him not be afraid of a little weariness in his Master's service. If the gleaning is good, the spiritual gleaner will not mind fatigue in gathering it. One says, "I walk five miles every Sunday to Chapel." Another says, "I walk six or seven miles." Very well, if it is the Gospel, it is worth not only walking six or seven miles, but 60 or seventy, for it will pay you well! The gleaner must look for some toil and trouble. He must not expect that everything will come to him very easily. We must not think that it is always the field next to our house that is to be gleaned—it may be a field at the most distant end of the village! If so, let us go trudging off to it, that we may get our hands and arms full.

But I remark, next, that *the gleaner has to stoop for every ear she gets.* Why is it that proud people do not profit under the Word of God? Why is it that your grand folk cannot get any good out of many Gospel ministers? Why, because they want the ministers to pick up the corn for them! And beside that, many of the ministers hold it so high above their heads that they can scarcely see it. They say, "Here is something wonderful," and they admire the cleverness of the man who holds it up! Now, I like to scatter the corn on the ground as much as I can. I do not mean to hold it up so high that you cannot reach it. One reason is that I cannot—I have not the talent to hold it up where you cannot see it—my ability will only allow me to just throw the corn on the ground, so that the people can pick it up. And if it is thrown on the ground, then all can get it. If we preach only to the rich, they can understand, but the poor cannot. But when we preach to the poor, the rich can understand it if they like. And if they do not like it, they can go somewhere else. I believe that the real gleaner, the ones who get any spiritual food, will have to stoop to pick it up—and I would gladly stoop to know and understand the Gospel! It is worth while going anywhere to hear the Gospel, but, nowadays, people must have fine steeples to their places of worship, fine gowns for their ministers and they must preach most eloquently. But that is not the way the Lord ordained—He intended that there should be plain, simple, faithful preaching. It is by the foolishness of such preaching that He will save them that believe. Beloved Friends, remember that gleaners who are to get anything must expect to stoop.

Note, in the next place, that *what a gleaner gathers, she gets ear by ear.* Sometimes, it is true, she gets a handful, but that is the exception, not the rule. In the case of Ruth, handfuls were let fall on purpose for her, but the usual way is to glean ear by ear. The gleaner stoops and picks up, first one ear, and then another, and then another—only one ear at a time. Now, Beloved, where there are handfuls to be had at once, that is the place to go and glean! But if you cannot get handfuls, go and get ear by ear. I have heard of certain people who have been in the habit of hearing a favorite minister in London, saying, when they go to the sea-

side," We cannot hear anybody after him. We shall not go to that Chapel any more." So they stay at home all day on Sunday, I suppose forgetting that passage, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." They cannot get a handful and, therefore, they will not pick up an ear. So the poor creatures are starved and they are glad enough to get back home! They should have gone, if they could get but one ear—and he is a sorry minister who cannot gave them that! And if they got only one ear, it would be worth having. If it is only six words of God, if we think of them, they will do us good. Let us be content, then, to glean ear by ear. Let us take away a whole sheaf with us if we can, but if we cannot do that, let us get the good corn an ear at a time.

"Oh," says a friend, "I cannot hear some ministers at all! They preach such a mingle-mangle of the Truth of God and error." I know they do, but it will be a strange thing if you cannot get an ear or two of wheat, even from them! There is a great deal of straw—you are not required to take that away—but it will be remarkable if you cannot pick up an ear or two of good grain. You say, "The error that the man preaches distresses my mind." No doubt it does, but the best way is to leave the lies alone and pick out the sound Truth of God—and if there is no sound Truth in the sermon, a good plan is to read it all backwards—and then it will be sure to be sound. I heard a man of that kind, once, and when he said a thing was so-and-so, I said to myself that it was not. And when he said such-and-such a thing would happen, I said it would not—and I then enjoyed the sermon! He said that the people of God, through their sin, would perish. I had only to put a, "not," into his sentence, and what a sweet and comforting message it then was! That is the way, when you hear a bad sermon, to qualify what the preacher says. Then, after all, you can make his discourse suggest spiritual thoughts to you, and do you good! But you must be content, wherever you go to hear the Word, to pick up the corn ear by ear.

Note, next, that *what the gleaner picks up, she keeps in her hands.* She does not pick it up and then drop it down, as some do in their spiritual gleaning. There is a good thought at the beginning of the sermon, but you are all eager to hear another—and you let the first go. Then, towards the end of the discourse, perhaps there is another flash and, in trying to catch that, you have forgotten all the rest! So, when the sermon is over, it is nearly all gone and you are about as wise as a gleaner who sets out in the morning and picks up one ear, then drop that and picks up another. She then drops that and pick up another. She would find, at night, that she had got—what? —that she had got nothing for all her trouble! It is just the same in hearing a sermon—some people pick up the ears and drop them as fast as they pick them up.

But one says, "I have kept nearly the whole of the sermon." I am glad to hear it, my Friend, but just allow me to make a remark. Many a man, when he has nearly the whole sermon, loses it on the way home. Very much depends on our conduct on our way back from the House of God. I have heard of a Christian man who was seen hurrying home, one Sunday, with all his might. A friend asked him why he was in such haste. "Oh," he said, "two or three Sundays ago, our minister gave us a most blessed discourse and I greatly enjoyed it. But as soon as I was outside

the Chapel, there were two deacons and one pulled one way, and the other pulled the other way, till they tore the sermon all to pieces! And though it was a most blessed discourse, I did not remember a word of it when I got home—all the savor and unction had been taken out of it by those deacons—so I thought I would hurry home tonight and pray over the sermon without speaking to them at all." It is always the best way, Beloved, to go straight home from your places of worship—if you begin your chit-chat about this thing and the other, you lose all the savor and unction of the discourse! Therefore I would advise you to go home as quickly as you can after the service—you might possibly, then, get more good than you usually do from the sermon and from the worship altogether!

Then, again, *the gleaner takes the wheat home and threshes it.* It is a blessed thing to thresh a sermon when you have heard it. Many persons thrash the preacher—but that is not half so good as threshing the sermon! They begin finding this fault and the other with him, and they think that is doing good—but it is not. Take the sermon, Beloved, when you have listened to it, lay it down on the floor of meditation, and beat it with the flail of prayer so you will get the corn out of it. But the sermon is no good unless you thresh it. Why, that is as if a gleaner should stow away her corn in the room, and the mice should find it—in that case, it would be a nuisance to her rather than a benefit. So, some people hear a sermon, and carry it home, and then allow their sins to eat it all up and thus it becomes an injury to them, rather than a blessing. But He who knows how to flail a sermon well, to put it into the threshing machine and thresh it well, has learned a good art, from which he shall profit much.

I have heard of an aged Scotchman, who, one Sunday morning, returned from "kirk" rather earlier than usual, and his wife, surprised to see him home so soon, said to him, "Donald, is the sermon all done*?"* "No," he answered, "it is all *said,* but it is not all *done* by a long way." We ought to take the sermon home, to *do* what the preacher has *said*—that is what I mean by threshing it. And some of you are content if you carry the sermon home. You are willing enough, perhaps, to talk a little about it, but there is no thorough threshing of it by meditation and prayer.

And then, once more, *the good woman, after threshing the corn, no doubt afterwards winnowed it.* Ruth did this in the field, but you can scarcely do so with the sermons you hear—some of the winnowing must be done at home. Observe, too, that Ruth did not take the *chaff* home. She left that behind her in the field. It is an important thing to winnow every sermon that you hear. My dear Friends, I would not wish you to be spongy hearers who suck up everything that is poured into their ears. I would have you all to be winnowers, to separate the precious from the vile! With all ministers there is a certain quantity of chaff mixed with the corn, but I have noticed in some hearers a sad predilection to take all the chaff and leave the corn behind. One exclaims, when he gets out of the building, or even before, "That was a curious story that the preacher told—won't it make a good anecdote for me at the next party I attend?" Another says, "Mr. Spurgeon used such-and-such an expression." If you hear a man talk in that way, do you know what you should say to him?

You should say, "Stop, Friend! We all have our faults and perhaps you have as many as anybody else—can you not tell us something Mr. Spurgeon said that was good?" "Oh, I don't remember that. That is all gone!" Just so, people are ready to remember what is bad, but they soon forget anything that is good.

Let me advise you to winnow the sermon, to meditate upon it, to pray over it, to separate the chaff from the wheat and to take care of that which is good. That is the true art of heavenly gleaning—may the Lord teach us it, that we may become "rich to all the intents of bliss," that we may be filled and satisfied with the favor and goodness of the Lord!

III. Now, in the last place, here is A GRACIOUS PERMISSION GIVEN. "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not."

Ruth had no right to go among the sheaves to glean, but Boaz gave her a right to go there by saying, "Let her do it." For her to be allowed to go among the sheaves, in that part of the field where the wheat was not already carted, was a special favor, but to go among the sheaves and to have handfuls of corn dropped on purpose for her, was a further proof of the kindness of Boaz.

Shall I tell you the reasons that moved the heart of Boaz to let Ruth go and glean among the sheaves? One reason was, *because he loved her.* He would have her go there because he had conceived a great affection for her, which he afterwards displayed in due time. So the Lord lets His people come and glean among the sheaves because He loves them. Did you have a rich gleaning among the sheaves the other Sabbath? Did you carry home your sack, filled like the sacks of Benjamin's brothers when they went back from Egypt? Did you have an abundance of the good corn of the land? Were you satisfied with favor and filled with the blessing of the Lord? That was all owing to your Master's goodness! It was because He loved you that He dealt so bountifully with you. Look, I beseech you, on all your mercies as proofs of His love! Especially look on all your spiritual blessings as being tokens of His Grace. It will make your corn grind all the better and taste all the sweeter if you think that it is a proof of love that your sweet seasons, your high enjoyments, your blessed ravishments of spirit are so many proofs of your Lord's affection to you. Boaz allowed Ruth to go and glean among the sheaves because of his love to her, so, Beloved, it is God's Free Grace that lets us go among His sheaves and lets us lay hold of doctrinal blessings, promise blessings, or experience blessings. We have no right to be there of ourselves—it is all the Lord's Free and Sovereign Grace that lets us go there!

There was another reason why Boaz let Ruth glean among the sheaves—*because he was related to her.* And that is why the Lord sometimes gives us such sweet mercies and takes us into His banqueting house, because He is related to us. He is our Brother, our Kinsman, allied to us by ties of blood. Yes, more than that, He is the Husband of His Church, and He may well let His wife go and glean among the sheaves, for all she gets is not lost to Him—it is only putting it out of one hand into the other since her interests and His are all one. So He may well say, "Beloved, take all you please. I am none the poorer, for you are Mine. You are My partner, you are My chosen one, you are My bride, so, take it,

take it all, for it is still in the family and there is none the less, when you have taken all that you can."

What more shall I say to you, my beloved Brothers and Sisters? Go glean, spiritually, as much as you can! Never lose an opportunity of getting a blessing! Glean at the Mercy Seat. Glean in the House of God. Glean in private meditation. Glean in reading pious books. Glean in associating with gracious men and women. Glean everywhere—wherever you go! And if you can pick up only an ear a day, you who are so much engaged in business and so much penned up by cares, if you can only spare five minutes, go glean a little—and if you cannot carry away a sheaf, get an ear. Or if you cannot get an ear, make sure of at least one grain. Take care to glean a little! If you cannot find much, get as much as you can.

Just one other remark, and then I will close. O child of God, never be afraid to glean! All there is in all your Lord's fields is yours. Never think that your Master will be angry with you because you carry away so much of the good corn of the Kingdom. The only thing He is likely to be offended with you for is because you do not take enough! "There it is," He says, "take it, take it, and eat it. Eat abundantly. Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved!" If you find a sweet promise, suck all the honey out of the comb. And if you get hold of some blessed sheaf, do not be afraid to carry it away rejoicing. You have a right to it—let not Satan cheat you out of it! Sharpen up the sickle of your faith and go harvesting, for you may, if you will. And if you can, you may take a whole sheaf and carry it away for spiritual food. But if you cannot take a whole sheaf, the Lord teach you how to glean among the sheaves, even as Ruth did in the fields of Boaz. And may He, in the greatness of His Grace, let fall a few handfuls on purpose for you, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
DEUTERONOMY 8.

Verse 1. *All the commandments which I command you this day shall you observe to do, that you may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers.* Observe, dear Friends, that the Lord demands of His people universal obedience to His commands—"All the commandments which I command you this day shall you observe to do." Christians, although they are not under the Law, are under the sweet constraints of love, and that love incites them to complete obedience—so that they desire to leave undone nothing which the Lord commands. And this obedience is to be careful as well as complete. "All the commandments which I command you this day shall you observe to do." Not only do them, but do them with care. When the commandment applies to a certain duty, obey it in full, both in the letter and in the spirit, for there are numerous and weighty blessings attached to obedience—not of merit, but of Grace. If we walk carefully in the fear of God, we shall find that in keeping His commandments there is great reward.

2. *And you shall remember all the ways which the LORD your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you,*

to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments, or not. It is well to have a good memory and that is the best memory which remembers what is best worth remembering. There are many things which we would gladly forget, yet we find it hard to forget them. They often rise up at most inappropriate times and we loathe ourselves to think that we should ever remember them at all. But, whatever we forget, we ought always to remember what God has done for us. This should excite our gratitude, create deep humility and foster our faith both for the present and the future. "You shall remember all the ways which Jehovah your God led you these forty years in the wilderness" If forty years of the Lord's leading should make some of us bless His holy name, what ought you to do, my Brothers and Sisters, who, perhaps, are getting near the four-score years? What praise and gratitude should be rendered by you to Him who has led you all your life long! Look what God intends to accomplish by our wilderness experience. It is, first, to "humble" us. Has it had that effect? Then it is to "prove" us. Ah, I am afraid it has had that result—and has proved what poor wretched creatures we are! That has been proved in our experience, again and again. It is also that it may be known what is in our heart, whether we will keep God's commandments or not,

3. *And He humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you knew not.* What a wonderful sequence there is in these short sentences! "He humbled you, and suffered you to hunger." One would think that the next sentence would be, "and allowed you to starve." No, it is, "and fed you with manna." They had the better appetite for the manna and were the more ready to see the hand of God in sending the manna because of that humbling and hunger which God had previously suffered them to endure! "Fed you with manna, which you knew not." The very name by which they called it was, "Manna," or, "What is this?" "for they knew not what it was." "And fed you with manna, which you knew not."

3. *Neither did your fathers know; that He might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live.* God can make us live on bread if it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. He does make our souls to live upon His Word. He could, if so it pleased Him, make our bodies live by that Word without any outward sustenance whatever.

4. *Your raiment waxed not old upon you, neither did your feet swell, these forty years.* What a wonderful experience the Israelites had in the wilderness! They were always fed, though in a waste howling wilderness, dry and barren. They always had water following them from that stream which flowed out of the flinty rock, from which you might sooner have expected to strike fire than to obtain water. And as for their garments, they did not wear out! They had no shops to go to and they were unable to make new clothes in the wilderness on account of their frequent moving to and fro. Yet they were always clad and, though they were a host of weary pilgrims, marching backwards and forwards for forty years, yet their feet did not swell. Oh, what a mercy that was! "He keeps the feet of His saints." Has it not been so with you, also, dear Friends? You have said, "What shall I do if I live so long and if I have to bear so many

troubles, and make so many marches through the very Valley of the Shadow of Death?" What will you do? Why, you will do as you have done! Trust in God, and go on. You shall be fed and you shall be upheld even unto the end.

5. *You shall also consider in your heart.* Note that we are not only to remember God's dealings with us, but we are to consider them, to ponder them, to weigh them. "Consider in your heart."

5. *That, as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you.* Do I speak to anyone who is just now under the rod? "Consider in your heart," then, that God is dealing with you as a father deals with his sons, "for what son is he whom the father chastens not?" How would you like to be dealt with? Would you rather be without the rod? Then remember that "if you are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons." Do you wish to be treated so? I am sure you do not! You wish to have the children's portion, so you say, "Deal with me, Lord, as You are desirous to do with those that fear Your name. We are willing to have the rod of the Covenant for the sake of the Covenant to which it belongs!

6-8. *Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him. For the LORD your God brings you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and honey.* This is also the experience of the child of God—in one sense, in Heaven—but in another and perhaps a truer sense, even here below! "We which have believed do enter into rest." By faith we take possession of the promised land! And when a Christian gets out of the wilderness experience of doubting and fearing—and comes into the Canaan experience of a simple faith and a fully-assured trust—then he comes "into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and honey," for God gives to His people not only all they need, but something more. He gives them not only necessities, but also luxuries, delights and joys.

9. *A land wherein you shall eat bread without scarceness, you shall not lack anything in it.* When you live in communion with God and He brings you into the full enjoyment of the Covenant blessings, then there is no scarceness with you, there is no lack of anything!

9. *A land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you may dig brass.* Or, copper. Silver and gold they had none, but then the princes of Sheba and Seba were to offer them gifts and bring them their gold and their silver. But if they had nothing for show, they had plenty for use, for iron is a great deal more useful metal than gold. And the copper, which they hardened into brass, was of much more service to them than silver would have been. God will furnish you, dear Brothers and Sisters, with all the weapons you need for the Holy War. There may be no gold and silver ornaments for your pride, but there shall be iron instruments to help you in your conflict with your adversaries.

10. *When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.* God permits His

people to eat and to be full. But, when they are so, they must take care that they do not become proud—and that they do not begin to ascribe their profiting to themselves.

11. *Beware that you forget not the LORD your God, in not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I command you this day.* Whenever we see the word, *"Beware,"* in the Bible, we may be sure that there is something to beware of. The point here to note is that our times of prosperity are times of danger. I remember that Mr. Whitefield once asked the prayers of the congregation, "for a young gentleman in very dangerous circumstances," for he had just come into a fortune of 5,000 pounds. Then is the time when prayer is needed even more than in seasons of depression and loss!

12-16. *Lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; then your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought you forth water out of the rock of flint; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers knew not, that He might humble you, and that He might prove you, to do you good at your latter end.* Why do we get these passages repeated? Surely it is because we have such slippery memories and the Lord has to tell His children the same thing over and over again—"precept upon precept: line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" because we so soon forget.

17-20. *And you say in your heart, My power and the might of my hands has gotten me this wealth. But you shall remember the LORD your God: for it is He that gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore unto your fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, if you do at all forget the LORD your God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroys before your face, so shall you perish.* "If you sin as they do, you shall fare as they do."

20. *Because you would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.*

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

A FAR-REACHING PROMISE
NO. 2586

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 15, 1883.

"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."
Acts 2:39.

WE learn from the text a fact worth remembering, namely, that in the first stage of the Christian ministry, the thing to be aimed at is that men should be pricked in the heart. Then, in the second stage, the thing to be desired is that they should gladly receive the Word of God. Notice what is said in the 37th verse—"When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart." Then in the 41st verse—"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized." Hence, in the beginning, the preacher's business is not to convert men, but the very reverse! It is idle to attempt to heal those who are not wounded, to attempt to clothe those who have never been stripped and to make those rich who have never realized their poverty. As long as the world stands, we shall need the Holy Spirit, not only as the Comforter, but also as the Convincer, who will "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."

I am inclined to think that the large number of backsliders who, after they have professed to be converted, turn back to the world, may be accounted for by the fact that they never seriously felt their guilt and were never brought low by the work of the Holy Spirit convicting them of sin. Give me the old-fashioned form of conversion in which our fathers rejoice. I have lived long enough to see people jump into what they call salvation, and jump out of it as men plunge into a cold bath when they get up in the morning! Here is a person with a diseased leg. The doctor has looked at the limb, but he has not used his knife, he has not cut out the proud flesh—but he has applied a liniment and an ointment—and he has made a wonderful cure! Marvelous are the healing powers of the clever man. According to common reports he is in high repute everywhere around. Yes, so he may be, but that limb will never be right again—the surgeon has done a permanent injury to it under the pretense of having rendered its owner a great service. I believe that some men who are said to have been converted many times need to be converted now—and that multitudes of those who are trumpeted forth as having found the Savior do not yet know why they *need* a Savior and have *not* really found Him—

but have exercised presumption in the place of faith and a belief in their own excited feelings instead of in the Lord Jesus Christ!

It must be so, I am sure, because we constantly see, on all hands, men who have been washed into deeper stains and who are worse after their so-called conversion than they were before. There must be, dear Friends, a probing of men's hearts with the Law of God before we can rightly bring to them the healing of the Gospel. Old Robbie Flockhart's simile was a good one. He said, "You may take a piece of silk thread and try to sew with it as long as you like, but you will do nothing with it, alone—you need a sharp, piercing needle to go, first, and that will draw the silken thread after it. The needle of the Law of God prepares the way for the thread of the Gospel." There must be birth-pangs, or there will be no child born. The old-fashioned Grace of repentance is not to be dispensed with—there must be sorrow for sin—there must be "a broken and a contrite heart." This, God will not despise. But a "conversion" which does not produce this result, God will not accept as genuine.

So we shall still continue to preach the Law of God. We shall thunder out the terrors of the Lord. We shall not be fashionable and popular, and prophesy smooth things lest our labor should be declared to have been in vain when the Lord shall come. I charge all Brothers who are anxious for the true conversion of sinners, to be sometimes a little backward in dealing out comfort to them. Wait till you see that it is really needed! Wait till you perceive that there is a wound before you apply the healing balm. Until people are willing to confess their sins, you have no ground upon which you can comfort them. It is the man who "confesses and forsakes them" who "shall have mercy." Christ is a sinner's Savior and if a man is not a sinner, Christ has no salvation for him. Until he will take the sinner's place and frankly acknowledge his guilt, what is the use of preaching to him? Remember Christ's own words—"They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Now I am going to try to preach as wide, plain and open a Gospel as I can, but I have no hope of its being accepted by anybody unless, first of all, he has been pricked in the heart. I am persuaded that even the wondrous illimitable liberality of God is a thing which is despised by men until they have a sense of their need of His bounty. When that sense of need is worked within them by the Holy Spirit, then they leap at the very sound of the Gospel! But until then, their heart is gross, their ears are dull of hearing and they care not for the Free Grace of God.

Now let us come to our text—"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."

I. First, notice that the promise which God has made to man in Christ Jesus is A PROMISE WHICH EXACTLY MEETS THE NEED OF MANKIND. What is that promise?

First, it is *the promise of the Holy Spirit.* The Apostle Peter quoted from the Prophet Joel the promise which God had made that in the latter days He would pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh. That Holy Spirit is one of

man's most urgent needs. We are fallen, Brothers and Sisters—fallen through the agency of the evil spirit—and we need the help of the good Spirit that we may be raised again. Our nature is polluted at its very center! The old serpent has poured poison into the innermost fountain of our being and, therefore, we need that the Holy Spirit should come and pour life into us, renewing us in the spirit of our mind. We need the Holy Spirit to illuminate us, for we are both blind and in the dark. We need the Holy Spirit to instruct us, for, by nature, we are ignorance, itself, and it is His office to teach men. We need the Holy Spirit to soften our heart. Naturally, it is harder than the nether millstone, which is always the harder of the two, as it has to bear the grinding of the upper stone. We need the Holy Spirit to quicken us, for, by nature, we are dead in trespasses and sins, and to all good things callous and indifferent. Brothers and Sisters, we need the Holy Spirit that we should be regenerated, for it is written, "You must be born again," and we can only be born again, born from above, through the operation of the Spirit of God! When we are born again, we still need the Holy Spirit that He may sanctify us, that He may preserve us, that He may perfect us and make us qualified to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

Therefore, Sinner, if you say, "I feel myself to be powerless, incapable, like one that is dead," let not that stand in your way, for God gives the Holy Spirit on purpose to meet just such need as yours! Everything that is necessary to be done, which you cannot do, the Spirit of God will help you to do. And that which you can do, in a measure, but which you do very badly and inefficiently, the Spirit of God is given to help you to do, for He helps our infirmity. There is no strength needed in you, Sinner—He will be your strength! There is no good operation needed on your part—the Holy Spirit has come to work all your works in you. He works in us to will and to do according to His own good pleasure and then we, in consequence, thereof, work out our own salvation with fear and trembling! If you will but believe in Christ, you need not come to Him with a new heart—here is the Spirit of God to give you that new heart. You need not strive to make yourself tender and humble in spirit—here is the Spirit of God to make you tender and humble. There is nothing that you need endeavor to produce in yourself, for this Divine Being, who brooded over chaos and brought order out of primeval confusion, is ready to come and brood over *you*—over your dark, disordered, chaotic soul! He can spread His clove-like wings over it till you shall come to light, and love, and life, and liberty, and joy! Oh, is not this a mercy that inasmuch as we are so weak and helpless, the promise of God is that He will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?

But this is not all that a man needs in order that he may be saved. He needs, secondly, *the remission of his sin* and there is a promise that God will give to the penitent the remission of their sins. Hence Peter said, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Hearken, guilty One, there is remission of sin even for you! You who have lain soaking in sin till you are crimsoned with it, till your sin is ingrained

into your very nature, there is power with God to make that crimson white as snow, for, "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Whenever I repeat those gracious words of our Lord, I feel as if I had said something far more sweet than the choicest poetry, something infinitely more deserving to be written in letters of gold than all the sayings of the wisest philosophers of old! Tell the guilty man that God has mercy reserved for him and is prepared to forgive him—what better news can he ever hear? Tell him that it is not true, as some say, that everything we have ever done must necessarily remain upon us, to injure and to hurt us in this life and in the next, as long as we have any being—it is not so, there is a remedy provided by God for the disease of sin! Yes, God can remove the very scars which that disease has left behind when it is healed! Sin can be perfectly forgiven and forever put away. Remember the Lord's declaration: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins."

Now, when a cloud is gone, the sky is none the darker, it is just as blue as it was before that cloud was formed. Another emblem of God's Grace is that when He has washed us, we shall be whiter than snow. Snow, when it first falls, bears no trace of ever having been stained, it is so perfectly white. And God can wash you, poor Sinner, though you are guiltiest of the guilty, till not a speck of sin remains. "You are clean every whit," said Christ to His disciples. Oh, what a word was that, and it is true of all who trust Jesus! Being cleansed in His blood, no trace of sin remains!

Now put those two things together—the Holy Spirit working in us a change of heart and Jesus Christ working for us and preparing pardon for sin—and in those two things you have the supply of man's great need, which, put in a word, is *salvation.* In verse 21 you can see the promise about that matter—"Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." He shall be *saved*—that is, perfectly and completely saved both from the guilt of sin and from the power of sin! He shall not be half-saved, or saved in one particular form of salvation, but he shall be *saved.* Whoever, then, repenting, trusts in Christ and confesses his faith according to Christ's own rule, shall be saved! "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." This is the glorious promise which, in its wide sweep, comprises all that a sinner needs—the Holy Spirit, the remission of sin and salvation!

II. Now, secondly, let us enquire—TO WHOM IS THIS PROMISE MADE? According to my text, "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."

I never like to accuse my Brothers of being tricky, but have you ever heard this text quoted as far as this, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children"? And then a full stop is put in, to prove not that an infant ought to be baptized, but that an infant ought to be sprinkled? The argument used by many ministers is that the blessings of the Covenant are for Believers *and their children*—and some of you may sometimes have thought that the argument is rather difficult to answer. I do not like to

think that there has been any dishonesty in such a matter, still, one cannot approve of a Brother chopping a text off in the middle like that and trying to make it say exactly the opposite of what it really says!

Instead of this passage teaching that there is some special blessing for Christian people and their children, it teaches nothing of the sort! Peter declares that there is no limit of that kind to the range of this promise. Listen—"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." Suppose that I were to try and argue thus—"The promise is unto you, and to your children, therefore your children ought to be baptized." Go on with the text—"and to all that are afar off," therefore all that are afar off ought to be baptized. That would be the same kind of reasoning, but it would be the drivel of an idiot, with no reasoning in it! But the passage, instead of speaking of anything being a privilege to certain people and their children, expressly declares that while it is their privilege, and their children's privilege, it is equally the privilege of all that are afar off—"as many as the Lord our God shall call." That is to say, that great Covenant promise, "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved," is meant for you, is meant for your children, is meant for Hottentots, is meant for Hindus, is meant for Greenlanders, is meant for everybody to whom the Lord's call is addressed!

Our commission is, "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 is not any person in this place who does not come within the sweep of my text! The promise is to you if you are a Jew! It is to you if you are the child of a Jew, or if you are the child of a godly man—but it is also to you if you are afar off! If any are afar off because of sin, having gone into the far country away from God, or if they are afar off, literally, living in distant foreign lands, to them is the word of this salvation sent! The promise is for all to whom the message comes and, in its innermost and special sense, it is for all whom God shall effectually call by His Spirit, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, bond or free! That is the very glory of the text and upon that I want to reflect while I pass on to the next point.

III. That next point is this. Inasmuch as everything that a sinner needs for his salvation is made a matter of promise, and that promise is made to all that hear the Gospel, then, Brothers and Sisters, THIS IS A CAUSE FOR VERY GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT.

I hope that I am addressing some who are pierced in the heart and who, therefore, want to find Christ. Well, see what a promise you have to come upon! *And many have come to the Lord with far less encouragement.* When Jonah went to Nineveh, to utter his mournful and monotonous message, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," the king believed it and his people believed it—and they humbled themselves before God. Yet what had they to go upon? Only this, "Who can tell?" They said, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" So they came to God with no other encouragement but, "Who can tell?" Take heed, you who hear the Gospel, that

the men of Nineveh do not rise up in judgment against you to condemn you!

Take another case. There was the prodigal who came back to his father. Had he any promise from his father that he would receive him? No, nothing of the sort. It was only the prodigal's belief in his father's goodness that brought him back and his father did receive him. Take another case, that of the importunate widow who went to the judge, crying, "Avenge me of my adversary." Had she a promise that the judge would relieve her? Not at all! He was one who feared not God, nor regarded man—yet she kept on pleading with him and, though he even told her, no, perhaps scores of times, yet she pressed on with her suit till, at last, her importunity won the case!

Now see what vantage ground you stand upon compared with these people. You do not go to God with the question, "Who can tell?" You do not come to God merely with an inference drawn from the kindness of His Nature. You do not come to God merely persuaded that He will hear importunate prayer. But if you come to Him, you come with a *promise*, for, "the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off." And this is the promise—"Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Oh, I think you ought to come to God with joy on your face, for with such a sweet promise as this, you must, you shall prevail!

The second encouragement is that *God is always true.* It would be a dreadful supposition to imagine that God could lie. In fact, that would be sheer blasphemy! If a man is a righteous man and he makes a promise, he will keep it if he can. A good man "swears to his own hurt and changes not." Much more is the good God faithful to every promise He has ever made. "Has He said, and shall He not do it?" Then, if God has promised that whoever believes in His Son shall be saved, you may be sure that he will be! And whoever you may be, if you believe in Christ, you must be saved. "Lord, I know that You cannot lie." You may plead in that fashion with Him. Take His promise in your hand and say to him, "Do as You have said."—

"You have promised to forgive
All who on Your Son believe."

Plead that promise and you shall find it certainly fulfilled, for God did never yet draw back from a promise which He had made—and He never will! Oh, how that ought to encourage you in prayer! "But," says one, "may I grasp that promise, 'Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved'?" Of course you may! And if the devil says that you must not claim that promise, tell him that Peter said, "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off." And as you are one of those that are a long way off Jerusalem—and, certainly, the British islands must have been esteemed very far off in Peter's day—then you are one of those to whom that promise has come! Plead it and you shall find that it will be fulfilled to you.

Further, take encouragement from the next point, which is that *if God has made a promise, He certainly must be prepared to fulfill it.* I have

known a great many very promising young men who never were performing young men. They promise to do this and that, and the other—but they never do anything of the sort. I heard of one, the other day, who owed a great deal of money. He got the bill for the debt renewed and after that was done, he said to a friend, "Now that is all settled. How comfortable a fellow feels when he has no debts to trouble him!" He had not paid anything, he had not anything with which he could pay, he had only renewed his promise to pay—yet he felt perfectly content! Some people are willing to enter into any kind of promise or bond, but it never seems to occur to them that they must fulfill the obligation into which they have entered. We put them down as bad men and we do not want to trade with them—or associate with them!

But God never made a promise unless He was quite prepared to fulfill it. Men sometimes make promises because it is not convenient, or in their power to perform the promise at once, so they postpone its fulfillment. But when God makes a promise, He can fulfill it at once and He will always be ready to fulfill it whenever He is called upon to do so. Friends, if God has promised to give the Holy Spirit, He can do it! The Holy Spirit waits to descend into men's hearts. If God has promised to give the pardon of sin, He can do it. The ransom price is paid. The Atonement has been presented and accepted—

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

It has not to be filled. The sacrifice is not to be found, or to be offered when found. "It is finished." Everything that is required for your salvation is ready and I am sent to you to say, "Hungry souls that need a feast of mercy, the oxen and fatlings are killed! All things are ready, come to the supper." So that the Lord's promise ought to cheer you very much, since God is ready at once to fulfill it.

Yet again, here is another word of good cheer to you. *God has put salvation upon the footing of promise.* Not on the footing of *merit*—not on the footing of *purchase*—not on the footing of anything you can do, but on the footing of, "He has promised it." That is how the Covenant of Grace runs—"I will" and, "you shall." It is not, "You are to do this, to feel that and to be the other." But it is, "A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them." It is all promise, promise, promise, promise! When you call on a man for money and he says to you, "On what ground do you ask for this sum?" and you say, "Why, Sir, because you promised it," that is a good ground to go upon with one who is both able and willing to pay. If he said to you, "But I need to know whether you deserve this"—you are such an undeserving person that you would feel that you were out of court with him. But when your answer is simply this, "Whatever I may be, is not the question. I come because you promised"—that makes grand pleading! That is the way to be enriched with heavenly mercy, simply to say, "O Lord, You have promised Grace to all who trust

Your Son, and here I am —empty, naked, poor and undeserving—but I plead Your promise! For Your truth's sake, and for Your mercy's sake, fulfill that promise unto me."

Is not all this encouraging? I do not say to you, "The *law* is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off." But I say, with Peter, "The *promise* is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off." The word of promise is preached to you—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes on Him is not condemned." "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Or, putting it in Peter's words: "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Now observe, in conclusion, that no exception is possible in this case. Let me repeat that expression—no exception is possible in this case. Addressing all the Jews who were gathered around him, Peter said, "The promise is unto you!" Looking forward to all the future generations of Jews that were to be born, he added, "and to your children." And then, lifting up his eyes to the far-off Gentile world, looking in vision as far as "The Pillars of Hercules," and across "the silver streak" that separates these islands from the mainland—looking still further to Ireland as well and then to the great continent which Columbus afterwards discovered, he seemed to see red men, black men, white men and brown men—men of every race and clime and age! And he included them all by saying, "and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Comprehending the vast population of the whole globe, throughout all time, Peter says, "This promise is to you all, 'Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'"

Therefore, that is a promise to me! Well do I recollect the time when I first laid hold of that Truth of God. I was in great sorrow of soul, for I thought that there was no Gospel for me. But I caught a ray of hope from that blessed word, "whoever"—oh, how I love that word, "whoever"—"whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." And there was another cheering message. "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." I read what John Bunyan said about that text—"What, 'him,' is this? Why, it is any 'him that comes.' Any him, in all the world, that comes unto Christ, He will in no wise cast out." Perhaps you know how the blessed dreamer goes on about the rest of that verse—"'He will in no wise cast out.' Lord, I am a big sinner! 'I will in no wise cast out.' Lord, I have been a blasphemer! 'I will in no wise cast out.' Lord, I am an old sinner—I am 80 years old! 'I will in no wise cast out.' Lord, I have been an adulterer. I have been a fornicator. I have been a thief. I have been a murderer! 'I will in no wise cast out.'" So he goes over, and over, and over, and over with it to show that whoever comes to Christ, He cannot possibly cast him out, for if He did, it would make Christ a liar and it would make a lie of hundreds of texts! "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Look, Sirs, look! *It is not for God's honor to cast out a soul that comes to Him.* Suppose that there should be cast out one soul that came to

Christ? Suppose that one sinner who trusted in Christ should perish? I know what men would do. They would directly publish all round the world, "God has broken His Word! The Gospel has failed, for here is a soul lost that trusted in Christ!" You do not suppose God will allow that, do you? In imagination, I see that poor soul going down to Hell. He is no sooner there than the devil says to him, "Did you trust Christ?" "Yes, I did." "Did He refuse to save you?" "Yes, He did." "Do you mean to say that you fulfilled the Word of God, 'He that believes and is baptized'?" "Yes, I did." "And yet you are not saved!" Oh, what a roar of laughter would go all round the Pit! How every fallen spirit, rising from his dungeon, would begin with unhallowed glee to shout and yell! How through the deep compound of pandemonium, where evil reigns supreme, there would go up their hisses and their hoots against a defeated Savior—against a conquered Christ—against a lying God—against One that said, and did not do, and that spoke, and was not true. "Aha, aha, Emmanuel, Diabolus has defeated You! Aha, aha, Jehovah, Your Word is forfeited!" Shall such a thing ever be? You shudder as I picture it. It never shall be! Heaven and earth shall pass away and, as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bears it, and is lost forever, so shall the universe pass away, but never shall a sinner come and cast himself on Christ—and yet be allowed to perish! Try it, Sinner! Try it! Try it now! God help you to try it, and to prove that, still, Christ receives sinners and casts out none who trust Him! The Lord bless you, for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 2:1-42.

We cannot too often read the story of that wondrous outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. And let us never read it without asking the Lord to manifest in our midst the fullness of the Spirit's power. We may not have a repetition of the miraculous gifts which were then bestowed upon the Apostles and those who were with them, but we may have that gracious influence which shall convince and convert those who gather to hear the Word. Our success in preaching the Word is entirely dependent upon the Presence and working of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, let our prayer be—

"Lord God, the Holy Spirit,
In this accepted hour,
As on the day of Pentecost,
Descend in all Your power.
The young, the old inspire
With wisdom from above
And give us hearts and tongues of fire,
To pray, and praise, and love."

Verses 1-13. *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit,*

and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under Heaven. Now when this was heard abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What does this mean? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. The people who came together were greatly astonished to find the disciples of Christ speaking to them in their own tongues. Though all the speakers were Jews and naturally knew no tongue but their own, yet they were able to talk in divers languages. Therefore some of their hearers, mocking, said, "These men are fall of new wine."

14-21. *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, You men of Judaea, and all you that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel—And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will show wonders in Heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord comes: and it shall come to pass that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.* I did not detain you to speak about the moon turned into blood, or the sun darkened into midnight—those matters are of small consequence to you and to me compared with this sentence: "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." What a blessed door of hope is this! What a window, letting the light of Heaven shine into the darkest despondency! Whoever shall address himself to God by repentance, by faith, by prayer, shall be saved!

22, 23. *You men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.* This was bold talking, for Peter was doubtless addressing many of the very people who had put the Lord to death—and he charges them with it! Observe how he declares that Christ's death was in accordance with "the determinate

counsel and foreknowledge of God," yet he expressly says that, "by wicked hands" they had crucified and slain Him. It never occurred to Peter that the counsel of God deprived men of the responsibility and guilt of their actions. No, neither need it ever occur to you! If anyone shall ask you, "When anything is according to the foreknowledge and counsel of God, how can God blame the doer of it?" you may tell him that he has first to explain to you what he means; and if he says there is a difficulty in it, ask him to tell you what the difficulty is. Those who knew better than the objector, could see none. The inspired Apostle Peter could see none, but when he was most vehement in charging these men with guilt, yet, at the same time he said that it was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God! Surely he was a bad pleader to introduce into his argument anything that could be readily construed into an excuse for those he was accusing! But there is no real excuse in it—the free agency of man is as true as the predestination of God—the two Truths stand fast forever! It is the folly of man to imagine that they disagree. If you do wrong, you are accountable for the wrong. And if there is a Providence which ordains everything—as certainly there is—yet that Providence takes not away from any man the full responsibility for anything that he does. So, truly did Peter say to these Jews concerning Christ, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

24-32. *Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be held by it. For David speaks concerning Him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because You will not leave my soul in Hades, neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You shall make me full of joy with Your countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a Prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in the abode of the dead, neither His flesh did see corruption. This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.* Here Peter appealed to the eleven, and to all the disciples then present who had seen Jesus after He had risen from the dead. It must have been a very impressive sight as they all stood up bearing witness that they had seen the Christ, who was crucified, alive after His death! It was a wonderful public attestation to that grandest of all facts—the raising again from the dead of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God!

33. *Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has shed forth this, which you now see and hear.* Was not that enough to convince them? They saw and they heard the proofs of the working of the Spirit among them—and Peter told them that "this" was the gift of Christ, who had as-

cended up on high. It must have been a very striking thing to have been there, and to have heard and seen these tokens of God setting His seal to the work of Jesus.

34-36. *For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he says himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit You on My right hand, until I make Your foes Your footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ.* What a climax to Peter's sermon! How simple and yet how triumphant is the argument! We do not wonder that men were convinced by it.

37. *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart.* There is a great distinction between being cut to the heart and being pricked *in the heart*. Those who were cut to the heart stoned the preacher, but they who are pricked in the heart yield a sweet obedience to the will of God! "They were pricked in their heart."

37-40. *And said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 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. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.* Not, "save yourselves," but, "save yourselves *from this untoward generation*." Come out from among them! They are guilty of the death of Christ. You will be found guilty of it, too, unless you now disown the people who committed that awful crime! Come right out from among them and be altogether separated from them.

41, 42. *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—488, 498, 499.

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 13, 1883.

"Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."
Romans 5:10.

THE first great message of mercy to a sinner is put into four short words in the eighth verse of this chapter—"Christ died for us." A preacher can never be wrong in lifting up Christ Crucified! It is the glory of a congregation if it can be truly said, "Before your eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you." Well did the Apostle make this his boast—"We preach Christ Crucified." Still, we must always remember that there is a great deal about Christ besides His Crucifixion and, however glorious His death may be—and we are not disposed to rank it second to anything else—yet there is another glory, another form of His excellency which is seen, not in His death, but in His life! It is of this that the Apostle speaks here—"Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

Before we come to the consideration of that subject, dear Friends, let us think of what the death of Christ has done for some of us. The former part of the verse from which our text is taken says, "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." What was that reconciliation? Of what did it consist? We will not talk so much doctrinally, as practically and experimentally. We were once enemies of God, but we are not enemies of God any longer. God was once angry with us, but God is not angry with us any more. If we have believed in Jesus Christ, a complete reconciliation has been effected between the offended God and the offending sinner. In this reconciliation, I see, first, that God, who is always Love, and has always loved His people, being just, was unable to deal with the guilty sinner except upon the footing of justice—and justice demanded that the sinning soul should die! But Christ has come that God, as the great moral Ruler, might be able, without violation of His holiness, to deal mercy with sinful men.

Let there be no mistake about the objective and purpose of Christ's Sacrifice! John Kent's hymn rightly says—

"'Twas not to make Jehovah's love

Towards the sinner flame,
That Jesus, from His Throne above,
A suffering Man became.
'Twas not the death which He endured,
Nor all the pangs He bore,
That God's eternal love procured,
For God was Love before."

He was always Love to His people, but, until Christ came to earth and died, the Just for the unjust, that love could not freely flow. There was a dam that blocked up the stream. There was a great rock in the channel and the rivers of love could not flow. But by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, that impediment has been removed. God can now be "just and the Justifier of him which believes in Jesus." I have already said that in His heart of hearts, there was always love towards His people, but as the Judge upon the Judgment Seat, He could not display that love—He could only manifest His indignation against every soul of man that did evil.

Now, this most righteous wrath of God was removed by the death of Jesus Christ and could not have been removed by any other manner. The sword must find its victim and Christ bared His breast to let infinite Justice spend its full force on Him. The debt had to be paid and Jesus paid it to the last penny with His own life which He poured out upon the Cross. The cup of wrath must be drained—there was no putting it aside—so Jesus took it and, after saying, "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Your will be done." He put it to His lips and never took it away till He had drained it to its last drop. There was a necessity for Christ's death, "it behooved Christ to suffer," and by His suffering He appeased the wrath of the great Judge of All, so that He could justly look upon guilty men with complacency. That wondrous change was worked by Christ's death and now the very justice of God demands our salvation. It is indeed marvelous that the righteousness of God, which was against us, should be made to be for us and that the Justice of God, which pronounced the sentence of death upon us, should be so transformed that Justice, itself, now decrees our eternal life! This is a wonderful part of the reconciliation.

But the Apostle speaks of our being reconciled—our being reconciled. Well, that comes about in this way. We felt in our conscience that we had sinned against God. I am not speaking of all here present, but I am speaking of all those upon whom the Spirit of God has worked salvation—our conscience felt a secret sting, as though a burning poison had entered into the veins of our spirit. I remember when the thought that I had offended God seemed to drink up my very life. Of course I did not love Him and I could not, for it is according to the nature of our sinful heart that if we do anyone an injury, we are sure to hate him. We do not always hate the man who injures us, but if we injure him, our hatred is almost certain to follow. And inasmuch as we had broken all God's Laws

and did not wish to admit it, we hated the Law itself. We kicked against it and tried to persuade ourselves that it was the root of the offense instead of our own willful hearts being the source of the evil. We knew God to be holy, but we did not love holiness—in fact, having no holiness of our own, we could not endure even to hear or read about it! We set up a counterfeit righteousness of our own and pretended that we were good, and all the while we were despising the true holiness and the perfect righteousness of God.

But, Beloved, when we saw Christ dying in our place, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God," then conscience said, "God is satisfied and so am I." When we saw that God's anger was removed because Christ had died, then our pettish, proud anger was removed, too, and we said, "Now are we reconciled to God by the death of His dear Son." Oh, with what swift feet we fled to the Mercy Seat! With what confidence, though with a holy trembling, we pleaded the merits of the dear Redeemer! And what joy and peace filled our mind! Then we no longer hated God, or hated holiness, or hated the Law of God, but we submitted ourselves unconditionally. We said, "The Law is holy and God is gracious—blessed be His glorious name." Thus, the death of Christ worked reconciliation, the anger of God was removed and so was the trouble of our conscience. Then were our hearts won! Shall I speak for all God's people here? I think I shall if I speak for myself and say—

"Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone,
But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Soon dissolves a heart of stone."

Oh, how our hearts were dissolved when we found that Christ loved us and that He had given Himself for us! When we saw God to be reconciled, how we longed for Him! Our heart and our flesh cried out for God, for the living God, and we said, "When shall we come and appear before God?" And that longing is still upon us—we delight in fellowship with Him. We are longing to be like He and we are expecting to be with Him where He is! And this is all the Heaven that we desire. Oh, blessed be God, it is a bleeding Christ who has reconciled us even on earth! It is a bleeding Christ who has put out the fires of enmity! It is a bleeding Christ who has slain forever the warfare in our spirit against God. Now are we reconciled unto God by the death of His Son.

Do not let me go a step further, dear Friends, until you can all get as far as this. If there is any man here who is not reconciled to God, let him remember what a terrible state he is in. He is God's enemy! How would any one of you like to have that title branded on your brow tonight, "God's enemy"? Remember that you will never be reconciled to God except through the bleeding Savior, so seek Him now! Before even a word is said about the ever-living Christ, come and put your finger into the print of the nails of the dead Christ! Come and wash in the fountain which He

has filled from His own veins! Come and accept the great atoning Sacrifice now! God help you, by His Divine Spirit, to do so, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake!

This brings us to the special subject mentioned in our text. "Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." The Apostle Paul here bids us remember that Christ is still alive and that although we are reconciled to God, we still need to be kept and preserved, or, as he calls it, "saved." And he tells us that as Christ's death has been effectual to reconcile us, we may be quite sure that His life will be effectual to save us. No, he says, "Much more." If the death of Christ has reconciled us, "much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

I want you, dear Friends, to do three things as you think of our text. First, consider *what the life of Christ is to us.* Secondly, consider *why the words, "much more," may be applied to it.* And, thirdly, consider *how we can use this life.*

I. First, then, briefly consider WHAT THE LIFE OF CHRIST IS TO US. If a man were to show me a picture of Christ on the Cross, I would say to him, "What is that?" If he were to answer, "A picture of my Lord," I would reply, "It is not a picture of *my* Savior as He now is. It may be a representation of Him as He once *was*, but not as He is now, enthroned in Glory." If a person were to carry about in his pocket the likeness of his mother taken after death, and were to draw it out, and say, "That is my mother," I would say, "I would prefer to remember her as she was at her best, not as she was in the agonies of death, or after death." So, I pray you, do not look upon any representation of Christ upon the Cross as the main representation of our Lord Jesus! He was dead but for a very little while. He was on the Cross only for a few hours. Our Savior lives, never more to die! The Christ of the Church of Rome, as I have often told you, is a dead Christ on the Cross, or else a baby Christ in Mary's arms—but the Christ of the Church of God is a living Christ! We say of the grave, as the angel said to the women, "He is not here: for He is risen, as He said." We say of the Cross, "He is not here. He has put an end to death in making an end of sin by His own death." The main thought concerning Christ, to those of us who really know Him, should be that He is the *living* Christ—

"He lives, the great Redeemer lives,
What joy the blest assurance gives!"

What has Christ's risen life to do with us? Well, first, *Christ's resurrection from the dead is to us who believe in Him the pledge that He has saved us.* When our Lord Jesus Christ died, He was, as it were, put in prison as a hostage for His people. And He was kept there till Divine Omniscience had searched His Sacrifice and searched His obedience to see whether they were complete. And when it was certified that Christ had finished all the work which His Father had given Him to do, then the sheriff's officer of Heaven, "the angel of the Lord," was sent down to roll away the stone and bid the Captive come out. And when Jesus Christ

came out of the grave, all His people came out of prison with their great Representative! In His own release from the tomb there was a token given to Him from God that their sins were forgiven and that His righteousness was accepted on their behalf. "He died for our sins," says the Apostle, but He also "rose again for our justification." Therefore, wrap not your hearts in the grave clothes which He left behind, but clothe them in the golden apparel *wherewith the rising Christ girded Himself,* for you are justified because He has risen!

Believing in the resurrection of Christ, we view Him as living and continuing to live—"Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him." What has that to do with us? Why, just what our Lord said to His disciples—"Because I live, you shall live also." Beloved, *because Christ has risen from the dead, so all His people shall rise.* And because, having once risen, Christ dies no more, so His rising saints shall be perfectly safe through all the future—*they shall live forever because they are partakers of His eternal life.* Is not that a subject for great rejoicing? I live because He died, for that death redeemed me from death. But yet more, I live because He lives. "For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in Glory."

Now follow with me this living Christ. We have seen that He is risen and living, what comes next? A few days after this living Christ rose from the grave, a little throng gathered about Him on "the mount called Olivet" and, to their surprise, He began to ascend. Scattering benedictions with both His hands, He continued to ascend till, at last, "a cloud received Him out of their sight." What has that ascension to do with us? Why, just this. He said to His disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you." *He has gone up into Glory, as our Representative,* to take possession of eternal joy for us. He has gone within the veil that He may represent us before His Father's face, that, by-and-by, we may join Him and be with Him where He is, to go no more out forever! Therefore, Beloved, let us rejoice. As the Lord our Savior has ascended into Heaven, so shall we, in His own good time. I always admire that line of Dr. Watts, where he says that our Lord, in His ascension to Heaven, has "taught our feet the way"—

"Up to our God our feet shall fly,
On the great rising day."

Earth cannot permanently hold us down now Christ has gone up into His Glory! The living Christ is a greater attraction than any other force. We who believe are one with Him and, as He has ascended, we also shall rise to Him and be forever with Him!

After He had ascended, He took His seat at the right hand of God, even the Father, clothed with honor, majesty, power, dominion and might. Listen, Brothers and Sisters! What has this fact to do with us? Why, just this—*you who believe cannot perish, for Christ lives! You must conquer, for Jesus reigns!* All power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth and,

"He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He *always* lives to make intercession for them." A reigning Christ, an enthroned Christ—this is the Christ to depend upon! I can risk my whole soul upon His blood and know that there is no risk in the matter—I feel a deep and growing confidence in the life that He now lives upon the Throne of God.

But what else? Well, our glorified Redeemer spends much of His time in intercession. Up there at the right hand of God, He continues to plead for His people. He can truly say in the fullest meaning of the words, "For Zion's sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns." Continually does He present the rich incense of His merit before the eternal Throne of God. And here is something more for us, for *if Jesus pleads for us, we are forever safe.* If He is pleading before the Throne, we may come to it with holy confidence. If Christ is there, the way is clear for you and for me to approach! We have only to get behind Him and to look through His wounds at God, as God will look through the wounds of Christ at us—and all will be well! Oh, what do we not owe to the living Christ! My theme expands as I try to handle it. How my heart rejoices in it! Do you not know, Beloved, how every part of that risen life of Jesus—His Second Coming, His final conquest of Satan and of the world, His eternal Glory—all has to do with *us*, for we are sharers in all that Christ has! We are joint-heirs with Him of all His glories and His triumphs!

This, then, is just a brief summary of what the life of Christ has to do with us.

II. Now, secondly, WHY DOES THE APOSTLE PUT A, "MUCH MORE," IN HERE? "Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

I think it is *because we are so apt to put a, "much less," to it.* It is not often that we preach and talk as we ought about this living Savior of ours. Brothers and Sisters, the great Testator is dead. That makes His last will and testament valid. Listen once more—He who made the will is alive, again, so He is His own Executor to carry out His own will! Is not that a blessing for you and for me? He made the will valid by His death, but, by rising again, He has come to see that every jot and tittle of it shall be carried out! We have not to depend upon somebody else executing our dying Savior's will. He has risen from the dead, clothed with all power and might, to accomplish that upon which He has set His heart!

Paul says, "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." How can it be much more? I answer, first, *because when our Savior reconciled us by His death, it was the time of His weakness.* Look, He is nailed to the Cross, the fever burns Him up, He cries, "I thirst." He says, "I am a worm, and no man." Weakness has come upon Him to the

uttermost. He closes His eyes in the last dread sleep of death. They take down His poor body and wrap it in white linen, with sweet spices, and put it away in Joseph's tomb. There could not be greater weakness, could there, than in the Crucified Christ? Yet, even then, He reconciled us! But now He is clothed with power! He is Head over all things, Lord of angels, King of kings! All Heaven resounds with His praises. Do you not see the drift of my argument? If, when He was in His uttermost weakness, He redeemed us by His death, "much more," now that He is in all His power and Glory, He must be able to save His people by His life!

Look at this expression again. *When our Lord died, He was in the servant's place.* He had, for our sake, laid aside His Glory. "He made Himself of no reputation." He emptied Himself. He had become like ourselves, feeble and weak. But, beside that, He was bound to do the Father's will and to suffer it even to the last extremity! As the Mediator between God and man, He had made Himself inferior to God. He had taken a subordinate place so that He could truly say, "My Father is greater than I." But remember, Brothers and Sisters—

"The head that once was crowed with thorns,
Is crowned with glory now!
A royal diadem adorns
The mighty Victor's brow!
The highest place that Heaven affords
Is His, is His by right,
The King of kings and Lord of lords,
And Heaven's eternal light."

Now He wears again the Glory which He had with His Father before the earth was. Do you not see, then, that it is, "much more," that He can do for His people under such circumstances? If, when He took an inferior place and condescended for our sake to be a servant, so that—

"With cries and tears He offered up
His humble suit below"—

if then He reconciled us—"much more" can He now save us when He has taken to Himself His great power and with authority pleads before His Father's face, "I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold my Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." If I can trust a dying Savior with my soul and feel perfectly safe in doing so, how easy it is to trust a living Savior and to roll myself upon His almighty love and feel eternally secure!

Furthermore, dear Brothers and Sisters, when our Lord took upon Himself the work of saving us, *He did, in a certain sense, come under the displeasure of God.* Not that He ever could be really displeasing to God, for in Him was no sin, and the Father never had a greater delight in Christ than when He hid His face from Him. Still, according to the Word of God, Jehovah bruised Him—Jehovah hid His face from Him till Jesus cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He came under the

curse, for, "cursed is every one that hangs on a tree." For your sakes and mine, He bore the scourging of Infinite Justice and the frown of the offended Majesty of Heaven! This was diving very low and if, even then, He was able to reconcile us to God, how, "much more," must He be able to save us now that the Father's well-beloved Son has come Home, again, and lives in the eternal sunlight of His dear Father's smile? "Much more" now that God delights in Him, all Heaven is lit up with the gleaming of the Father's joy, every angel bows before Him and, night and day, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" rises in perpetual waves of praise up to the Throne of Glory where He is adored and worshipped!

Yet once again, *when the Savior died, there was a certain aspect of defeat about His death.* He stood alone, that dreadful day, in deadly conflict with the powers of darkness. All the battalions of Hell were mustered and they made one tremendous attack upon the Prince of Life and Glory. Single-handed He fought them all and His own right hand and His holy arm gained Him the victory! But, for a while, it looked like defeat. He closed His eyes in death, saying, "It is finished," and He gave up the ghost. Those nail-prints, that gory side and that pallid Countenance looked as if Death had won the victory, though it was not really so. Yet, Beloved, He reconciled us even then! Oh, could we see Him now! I suppose we could not—our eyes are not yet formed for that Beatific Vision. But what a sight it would be if we could see Him with His eyes like a flame of fire and His feet like fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace! One said, "You cannot see Christ's face and live," and another answered, "Well, be it so. Then let me see His face and die." And I have often felt that I could say the same and I have sung, with good Dr. Watts—

"Oh, for a sight, a pleasing sight,
Of our Almighty Father's Throne!
There sits our Savior crowned with light,
Clothed in a body like our own.
Adoring saints around Him stand,
And thrones and powers before Him fall!
The God shines gracious through the Man,
And sheds sweet glories on them all.
Oh, what amazing joys they feel
While with their golden harps they sing,
And sit on every heavenly hill,
And spread the triumphs of their King!
When shall the day, dear Lord, appear,
That I shall mount to dwell above,
And stand and bow among them there,
And view Your face, and sing, and love?"

Well now, if, when He lay there, all blood-bespattered and dead, defeated as it seemed, He reconciled us to God, my Brothers and Sisters, what can He *not* do, now that He is in all the splendor of His majesty, the delight of Heaven and of all holy beings? He must be able to save us! Well may we entrust our souls to Him and say, with the Apostle, "I am not

ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

III. So now I close by asking you to CONSIDER HOW WE CAN USE THIS LIFE OF CHRIST.

If Christ is still alive and if there is, in a certain sense, "much more" power to save in His life than there was of power to reconcile in His death, then, first, *all fear of our being overcome ought to vanish.* He is victorious! Therefore we shall be victorious! Christ was assaulted by all the powers of death and Hell, and yet He conquered and He lives. We, too, shall conquer, for He is in us, He is with us, He is over us—and we shall live though we die—and we shall win though we are apparently overcome!

How shall we use this life of Christ? Why, next, *let us use it in prayer.* When you feel that you cannot pray—and there are such times with all of us—then say, "He can pray, for He lives to make intercession for us."—

"Give Him, my Soul, your cause to plead,
Nor doubt the Father's Grace."

When it goes hard with you on your knees and you seem as if you could not prevail, then remember that Jesus is pleading, and He must prevail! Put your case into His hands and He will present His mighty pleas on your behalf—and then you cannot be baffled. Is not that a sweet thought?

Another use to make of Christ's life is this. *Are you lonely?* In this modern Babylon of London, there are many persons who are quite alone, and there is no solitude so terrible as that which can be found in a great city. Perhaps you live in a street where there are hundreds of Christians, but you do not know one of them. I will tell you what to do—*Jesus lives, get away to Him, for there is no company like His.* If He comes into that little room of yours, it will be like a temple! Solomon's Temple, in all its glory, was never so bright as that upper room of yours will be when Christ comes there! I know how you have to stitch away all day long to earn a scanty living. I know, too, how sometimes you cannot sleep at night because of the severe pain you have to suffer. But if your Lord is there, it shall be sweet work, and sweet suffering, too, with that best of workers and sufferers to sit at your side! Jesus lives! Jesus lives! You have not to go to Calvary to think about His Cross. You have not to go to the tomb and weep because He is dead. He lives and He is with His people always, even unto the end of the world. Therefore, in your prayers, and in your solitude, comfort yourselves.

I suppose, too, that many of you are *sorely tempted.* Is there a Christian man or woman among us who is not tempted by the devil? Well, Jesus lives, and He was tempted in all points like as we are, though without sin! He is able to sympathize with you, for He, Himself, was compassed with infirmity. Get to your living High Priest! Tell Him what the devil is trying to do to you. It is a good thing to never dispute with the

devil. I have heard that if a man brings a lawsuit against you, you had better never say anything to him, but transfer the whole affair to your lawyer. And if the man writes to you, say, "I have nothing to do with the matter. You must apply to my legal adviser, he will attend to it for me." "He who is his own lawyer has a fool for a client," says one of our proverbs. So, whenever the devil comes to you, remember that he knows a great deal more than you do, and if you try to answer him, he will soon trip you up. You had better say to him, "I will have nothing to do with you, Satan. I refer you to my Solicitor, my Advocate." Then the devil will ask His name, and when you give him the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, he will drop that suit, for he has suffered severe defeat many a time from that same Jesus Christ, ages and ages ago! He remembers the wilderness and how the Master soon sent him about his business. So, refer him to Christ. Do not be your own champion—let Christ be Champion for you and all will be well!

In other words, dear Brothers and Sisters, since Christ lives, let us live with Him, let us make the Lord Jesus Christ our daily Companion. I know that there are some Christians who cannot understand this advice, or cannot believe that they may put it into practice. But you will never know the very juice and marrow of the Gospel until you do understand it and get to feel that Christ is not a mere historical Person who was upon the earth hundreds of years ago, but a living, personal Christ who is, even now, accessible, who can be spoken to and who can speak to us in reply—and with whom we may live even now! Oh, if you can get into personal contact with Jesus Christ, then you have learned how to live! Then is the dying Savior inexpressibly dear to you and then, also, the living Christ is, if possible, even more dear as you live through Him—with Him—for Him—and He lives in you!

So may God make it to be, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 5.

Verse 1. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Do not let us simply read these words, but let us, each one, say in our hearts, "That is true. I have believed in Christ, therefore I am justified in the sight of God and, therefore, I have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." There is nothing in the world that is half as valuable as the two precious gems in this verse—justification and the peace which follows it.

2. *By whom also we have access by faith into this Grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the Glory of God.* See what we owe to Christ—not only justification and peace, but we have access into the Grace in which we stand, for, when a man is at peace with God, then he

longs to get to God and to speak with God. Christ is the Door, and Christ is the Way—we come to God by Jesus Christ. This is no small privilege. Oh, you who have ever felt what it is to be shut out from God, let your heart sing as you know that you now have access by faith into this Grace wherein you stand! Well may the Apostle add, "We rejoice in hope of the Glory of God." Or, if there is any man who may and must rejoice, it is the man who has peace with God and expects to dwell with God forever, having access to God by Jesus Christ!

3. *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also.* Paul is going upstairs, as it were—rising from one platform to another. There is enough of Glory in Christ to wrap up all our troubles—it makes the black, white, and the dark, bright.

3. *Knowing that tribulation works patience.* A man who never suffers does not know what patience means. But trial works patience, yet not of itself. Trials work peevishness and murmuring and discontent—but Grace brings sweet out of bitter and—"tribulation works patience."

4, 5. *And patience, experience, and experience, hope: 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.* Do you know what this means, dear Friend, or is it all Greek to you? The Lord make it, indeed, plain everyday English to you! May you understand it, feel it, know it, prove it, taste it, enjoy it! If you do so, happy, indeed, are you.

6. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* Not, "Christ died for saints, because the saints were such gracious people." No, no! But, "when we were yet without strength"—when we could lift neither hand nor foot to help ourselves—"in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

7. *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die.* For a man who is perfectly just, there are few who would be willing to die for him.

7. *Yet, perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die.* For a generous, noble-hearted man, some might be willing to die. Yet there is a, "perhaps," even about that.

8. *But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* When we were not righteous, when we certainly were not good, when the whole description of our character could be summed up in that one word, "sinners"—rebels offending against God—"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.* He died for us when we were unrighteous, so now that He has made us righteous in His own righteousness, He will never cast us away! That doctrine of Believers falling from Grace and perishing is clean contrary to Scripture! "Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

10, 11. *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. And not only so, but we also joy in God.* See, the Apostle has gone up to another platform. The Gospel is a tale that we may be always telling, but it can never be fully told! It is a light that keeps on breaking upon us more and more—and even when we have come to what we suppose is the full noontide of it, there is still seven times as much Glory yet to be revealed! Yes, we go "from strength to strength." "And not only so, but we also 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 who 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.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—317, 337, 329.

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PERFECT RESTORATION
NO. 2588

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 20, 1883.

"They shall be as though I had not cast them aside."
Zechariah 10:6.

You all know how God did, for a time, cast off His ancient people. Both Israel and Judah, after long provocation of Jehovah, were carried away captive into the land of their enemies. God forsook His Temple and that glorious sanctuary was laid in ruins. The whole land was given up to be the prey of the cruel foe and the inhabitants, themselves, were carried into captivity beyond the rivers of Babylon. And they were sorely afflicted. They had greatly sinned and heavy was their punishment. But now, by the mouth of the Prophet Zechariah, God talks to them of mercy and, as a choice note in the message of mercy, He says that He will restore them to their old estate—and they shall be as though He had never cast them aside. It is a wonderful promise! I pray that it may sound like heavenly music in the ear of many a backslider.

In commencing my sermon, I draw your attention to the preceding clause of the verse—"I will have mercy upon them." Learn from this that the only terms upon which God can deal with guilty men are terms of mercy—"I will have mercy upon them." Therefore, my Friend, if you would be saved, do not try to deal with God upon the footing of *justice*. If you do, you will first have to say that you have never sinned and that would be a lie. You will not be able to prove that assertion—your lips, your eyes, your heart, your hands, your whole conduct will all be witnesses against you! You must admit that you have *sinned*. It may be that you will then try to find some excuse for your sin. You say, perhaps, that you could not help it. But you might have helped it—you ought to have helped it. Or, possibly, you will try to make out that your sin is very little. But your conscience knows that it is not little. If any one sin has been little—and I do not think that is possible—you have added so many other evils to these grains of sin that you cannot count them, and your transgressions are multiplied upon you! No, you will never make out a good case if you appeal to God's justice, for Justice will try you, condemn you, and cast you aside. God will not deal with you on those terms. Confess that you are guilty! Ask Him, for His mercy's sake, to pass over your guilt. Plead with Him, for His dear Son's sake, to blot it out and He will yield to such pleading as that—and He will deal with you in the way of mercy.

From the clause which follows my text I learn another lesson. The Lord says, "They shall be as though I had not cast them aside: for I am the Lord their God, and will hear them." From these words I gather that one of the surest tokens that mercy is about to be received is *prayer*—"I am the Lord their God, and will hear them." But God would not hear them if they did not pray, so, if you wish to know whether God is about to bless you, answer this question—Do you feel that you need to pray? Is your heart beginning to cry to God, even now? Then He will hear you and, hearing you, He will have mercy upon you! I care not what else there is about you that seems hopeful, if it cannot be said of you, "Behold, He prays," there is no solid ground for hope. But if, bowing your head in the pew at this moment, or even sitting still just as you are, you are saying in your heart, "Lord, have mercy upon me! Lord, save me!" this is a blessed token that the angel of mercy is close at hand! I trust, before this service is over, you will be saved, and have cause to praise and magnify the Lord for His great mercy toward you!

Now to come to the text itself, if we are dealing with God upon the footing of mercy, and if we have begun to pray, then this is what we may expect at His hands, for He has given the promise, "They shall be as though I had not cast them aside." I am going to take the text, first, *in its general application to all repentant sinners.* And then, secondly, *in its special application to all backsliders.* I have many things to say and, therefore, I must speak but briefly upon each point.

I. First, then, applying the text, IN GENERAL, TO ALL REPENTANT SINNERS, I say to every unsaved man and woman in this great assembly—If you will come to God by prayer, with faith in Jesus Christ, God will receive you and you shall be as though you had never fallen through your sin, and had never been cast aside by God! At the present moment, as an unconverted sinner, you are far off from God by wicked works—and His Word declares that you are "condemned already." But He is prepared to restore you to all the dignity which manhood had before the Fall! He is prepared to give back that which He took not away and to make you even as unfallen man was and would have been! Yes, and to give you something even more noble and glorious than Adam ever possessed.

For, first, He *is prepared to make a clean sweep of all your sins.* In virtue of the Sacrifice of Christ, God stands ready, right now, to take the pen and strike out the record of all your transgressions! If you believe in Jesus, you shall be as though you had never sinned! When the prodigal son came back and his father had kissed him, he was to his father as if he had never gone away, as if he had never wasted his substance in riotous living. His father had him once more at home and he loved him as much as he loved the elder brother, loved him as much as if he had never grieved him in all his life. What do you say to this? This privilege is proffered to you, also, in the Gospel of God. If you believe in Christ Jesus, your sins shall be as though they had never been committed and you shall be as dear to God as if you had always perfectly kept His Law!

That is good news for guilty sinners, but there is more to follow, for *God is both able and willing to renew your nature.* He will make you as

though He had not cast you aside. He will come and take away that heart of stone out of your flesh and then on that heart of flesh He will write His Law, and He will put His fear in your heart so that you shall eventually be as though He had never cast you aside. I mean that the blessed processes of regeneration and sanctification shall begin in your heart, if you believe in Christ, and the Holy Spirit shall go on working in your heart and you shall advance in the spiritual life from glory unto glory till, one of these days, you shall be as pure as an angel, as holy as God, Himself, and you shall open your eyes and see God—and in Heaven, itself, you shall understand the words of the Lord Jesus, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Sinner, you are lost and you are sinking down, down, down, through the defilement of your nature! But the Holy Spirit can come and change that nature so that you shall rise and rise, and rise, till, when Christ appears, you shall be like He, for you shall see Him as He is! Is not this a glorious Gospel that we have to preach to every soul that will repent of sin and believe in Christ? To penitent sinners, God gives the blotting out of their sin and the renewal of their nature!

This is not enough, however, if we are to regain all we have lost. When Adam sinned, he lost Paradise; but *God will give a better Paradise to sinners who repent.* Shall it be with you as though God had not cast you aside? Oh, yes, there is another Paradise into which Christ will introduce you in due time—and you shall have a foretaste of it, even while you are here, in the perfect peace and rest which He will give to your heart, for—

"The men of Grace have found Glory begun below;
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow."

But, by-and-by, you shall be taken up, as was the penitent thief to whom Christ said, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Only it shall be a better Paradise than that primitive Eden—it shall be a garden where flowers shall never wither and leaves shall never fall. There, dwelling with God in Glory, it shall be with you as though He had never cast you aside!

Nor is this all, for, before Adam fell there was no curse upon the world, and no curse upon Adam. The earth did not bring forth thorns and thistles and with no sweat of his face was man compelled to eat his hard-earned bread. And can God ever make it so with us? Yes, Brothers and Sisters, for *Christ has redeemed us from the curse.* If we are believers in Jesus, we may have, for a little while, to bear with this world's griefs, groaning as the whole creation does in travail for a better birth, but, as surely as we have been born again, so the day will come when there shall be new heavens and a new earth, and God will strike out thorns and thistles from among the world's products! "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." I expect to see this world, in the millennial age, restored to all the brightness with which God swathed it when first He sent it roiling from His great hands of power. It was a bright star, then, but sin has made it cloudy and imperfect. But Christ will take away all the mists and, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" shall yet ascend from this

poor planet, for then shall be realized the vision that John saw in the isle called Patmos—"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Now we are getting on—are we not? —towards the complete coming back to God, so that we shall be as though He had never cast us aside!

But even this is not all that the text means. Before Adam fell, He was *engaged in God's service.* He was head gardener in Paradise. God put him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. Well, Brothers and Sisters, however sinful you may have been, if you go to the Lord Jesus Christ, He will give you employment while you are here! He will set you in His vineyard to render Him some service. Perhaps He will choose you to look after the little children in the Sunday school. Maybe He will call you out to preach for Him, certainly He will want you to work for Him in some way or other. What a blessing it will be to be one of the servants of God! Will God ever employ us who once were so far from Him? Yes, it shall be with you as though He had never cast you aside.

But, then, God not only employed Adam to work for Him, but He *walked with Adam in the garden.* The Lord God was accustomed, in the cool of the day, to have fellowship with unfallen man—but will He confer such a favor as that upon us? Oh, yes! If we come to Him in Christ Jesus, God will come and speak with us and commune with us from the Mercy Seat and even in this life He will be our constant Companion and our ever-present Friend. And when we have done communing with Him here, He will take us up to that blessed place of which it is written, "His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads." Ah, Beloved, when we once get to our God in Heaven, then shall we find these words literally true, "They shall be as though I had not cast them aside."

O Brothers and Sisters, if we will but believe in Jesus Christ, there awaits us *an eternal destiny of unspeakable honor and delight.* If we will but believe in Christ, we need hardly regret that we have fallen, for He will so effectually restore us that all trace of sin shall be forever removed! Sin has defaced the image of God, but the Grace of God will renew it. By our transgression, we have lost everything that was worth having, but if we will but believe in Him, Christ will bring back everything through His blood and righteousness. Oh, cast not away the blessed alternative that lies before you! Choose not to be ruined! Choose not to continue in spiritual death! You are immortal—make not your immortality the most tremendous of curses! Come and believe in Jesus, that your immortality may become an attribute that shall make you like God, immortal in Glory! I do think that this matter is so clear and simple, that, if men were not maddened by sin, they would not delay a minute, but they would give up everything else, and say, "The all-important thing is for me to get my eternal destiny secured. I must go and believe in Christ. I must get to my God. I must obtain forgiveness of my sins." Oh, that you might be allured

to Christ by this sweet, sweet text, which is so musical to me that I wish to ring it again and again in every ear, "They shall be as though I had not cast them aside." I leave it with you—God bless it to every one of you!

II. But now I have to speak, in PARTICULAR, TO PENITENT BACK-SLIDERS.

I have no doubt that there are some such persons in this congregation, and I want to say to them, "The Lord addresses you—you wanderers—you turncoats, you who have been faithless, you who have turned aside—you who have started aside like a broken arrow or a deceitful bow—and He invites you to return to Him! He says of you, "They shall be as though I had not cast them aside." I know you and I pray you, now, to listen to me very earnestly. You have fallen into a sad state of heart and life. You used to be, perhaps, a member of this Church or of some other. But you are not fit to be a member of any Church just now, you know that you are not. You are living a very evil life and conscience tells you how wrong you are, and all the while you know better. You would not like me to tell your history since last you went to the House of God, or since you were numbered with God's people, would you? No, but at this moment the Lord says to you, "Return unto Me, and it shall be with you as though I had not cast you aside."

Come to Him, for *He is prepared to cast your sins behind His back,* into the depths of the sea, and to make an end of your transgression forever. What do you say to this wondrous mercy on His part? Oh, Boy, if you had provoked your father and had gone away and left your dear old home, if he wrote you a loving letter, and said, "Jack, my Son, come back to me and I will freely forgive you. You have behaved very shamefully, but if you will come home, there shall be an end of it all." Oh, would you not make haste back? So I say to you, Backsliders, will you not come home when our Father in Heaven sends you such a message as this, "They shall be as though I had not cast them aside"?

Perhaps you say, "Well, but, if I should ever become a Christian, again, as I hope I once was, yet *I should never get my joy back.* God might forgive me, but I never could forgive myself. Sir, you do not know to whom you are talking! You cannot imagine how far I have gone into sin. I was a woman who came to the Communion Table among the pure and godly, but, oh, now I am one of the cast-offs." Yes, I know. I know. But God says even to you, "Come back, come back, though you have unchastely left the Husband of your soul, yet is He prepared to receive you, again, and it shall be unto you as though He had not cast you aside." Yes, Brothers and Sisters, you may pray that prayer of penitent David, "Restore unto me the joy of your salvation. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which You have broken may rejoice." You professors know that you cannot go into sin without getting your bones broken if you are truly God's people! If you are not His chosen ones, you may go and live in sin, and riot in it—and He will leave you alone till the Great Judgment Day! But if you are His people, He will beat you till your very bones cry out. Yet, if you are prepared to come back to Him, just as you came at first, crying—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,

Simply to Your Cross I cling,"

He is ready to end it all and give you back your joy! Did not the father give joy to the returned prodigal? There was music and dancing and, "they began to be merry." And God will rejoice over a poor soul that has wandered far from Him, but at last returns—and the poor soul shall be happy, too. Yes, my dear Sister, my dear Brother, you can have back your early joy! You may yet sing with gladness of heart—

"I will praise You every day!
Now Your anger's turned away,
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding Sacrifice."

"Ah," I hear one say, "I might have my sin pardoned and I might get back my joy, but *can I ever have my purity restored?* I have defiled myself—my very thoughts are impure. I have mixed with company that has depraved me. I feel that my garments may be washed, but they will always smell of the loathsome places where I have been. I am afraid that if the wounds that sin has made are all healed, the scars will always show. I have blackened myself so that I fear I can never be white again." Well, yours is an evil case, indeed. It is a hard task to get the stench of sin out of a garment spotted with the flesh. The Lord will have to pull you out of the fire, but yet, when He undertakes that task, He can strip you of that filthy garment and He can cause you to hate the sin that you have loved! He can make it so loathsome to you that the very thought of it shall make you sick. I have known the drunkard hate the very house where he used to get his drink and go to the other side of the street. I have known a swearer cured of his blasphemy in a minute. I have known the backslider who has indulged some lust of the flesh, chasten his soul after it, so that the very mention of it has brought the tears into his eyes. He could not bear, even, to think of it! Yes, the Holy Spirit can give you back more than your former purity! He can create in you a clean heart and renew a right spirit within you. Truly, I have to preach a blessed Gospel to you, poor Backslider! Are you behind the pillar there? If so, may the arrow glance right round it and find you out, and reach your soul!

"Oh," says one, "but if I get back my purity, *do you think that God will ever love me again,* and dwell with me, and guide and bless me?" Well, He taught backsliding and repenting David to pray, "Take not your Holy Spirit from me," and when God put that prayer into David's mouth, it was because He meant to answer it! Yes, and He can come to you, even to you, and though it is now months since you had the light of God's Countenance and felt happy and restful in Christ, you shall have it all back again! Oh, have we not had joyous Sabbaths here, sometimes, when the Word of the Lord seems to ravish our very hearts with delight? And when we have gone downstairs to the Communion Table, I know that some of you have felt as though Heaven itself had come into your spirit! Well, you shall have those old Sabbaths over again, or rather, you shall have new communion with your Lord which shall be even more blessed! I know your private prayers used to be very precious—they shall be so again. You used to walk down a quiet street that you might talk with God, alone—you shall do it again. Poor Soul, you who have gone so far away from God, come back to Him! "Turn, O backsliding children,

says the Lord; for I am married to you." Therefore, return to Him and you shall behold His face again and, in His Presence you shall, once more, bathe your soul with exceeding joy!

"Ah," says one, "but *I should like to get back again among God's people."* Yes, that restored communion is a secondary matter in comparison with returning to the Lord, yet it is, in itself, a very valuable thing which ought to be highly prized. I am sure I can speak for all God's servants here—if this is the Church that you have dishonored, if this is the Church that you have grieved—none could be more willing to receive you back again than we are! I have felt a joy akin to that of Heaven, sometimes, when I have once more received into Church fellowship some who have sinned very grossly. I know that when they come back, they will love Christ better than ever, for they have had much forgiven! These are they who break the alabaster boxes and pour the precious ointment on their Savior's head. I know that Peters—who have denied their Lord—when they come back and weep bitterly over their sin, are the very men who will feed Christ's lambs and be shepherds to His sheep! I have sometimes heard of a bone, that has been broken, and has become stronger after the fracture than it was before. Indeed, I once saw such a bone that was taken out of a grave—it belonged to a leg that had been broken. How did we know that? Why, because it was thicker in that part than anywhere else! And, sometimes, it happens that Grace overrules the fall so that a man becomes stronger at that point where he fell and he is more watchful than he ever was before. Is not that a wonderful thing?

I hardly like to say it, for fear that some hypocrite may go and turn it into mischief, for there is always some child of the devil who will be ready to say, "Let us sin that Grace may abound." If you do say so, your damnation will be just, and it will be most terrible! But, to the child of God, we say, in a whisper, that it has sometimes happened that the very falling into sin of the backslider has been blessed of God to make him more careful in the future, and he has been a better man afterwards. Come along, you who have turned aside, but are now truly penitent, the Church will gladly take you back! Why should we not, remembering how liable we, ourselves, are to be tempted as you were? I give a hearty and loving invitation to you, Backsliders—it comes out of my very heart. If Christ, who is perfect, will receive you, much more will we, who are ourselves so imperfect, receive you!

"Oh, but," I hear one say, "*that would not make me quite as I used to be.* The text says, 'They shall be as though I had not cast them aside,' but I used to have a class in the Sunday school, I sometimes used to go out and preach." Brother, why should you not go out to preach again? Sister, why should you not again take a class in the Sunday school? Our dear Lord, when He pardons you, will give you something to do just as He did with Peter. I am sure that He will not say to you, "There, I have forgiven you, but you are of no further use to Me—go and sit in the back seat—for I shall never need your services again." Perhaps you may never be quite fit for what you were, before, and the Lord will not put you where you are not fit to be, but yet there will be some place where you will be more qualified to serve Him than you were before! For instance, in

looking after backsliders. If a backslider says to you, "I cannot come back," you will be able to say to him, "Why not? I did, and so can you." Did not the Master say to Peter, "When you are converted, strengthen your brethren"? You will be able to do that kind of work even better than others could and whenever anybody is inclined to be hard and harsh upon the wanderers, you will say, "Oh, do not speak so! I know the heart of a wanderer, for I was one, myself. I know how, when they repent, they are very tender and sensitive and, often, a little touch may open their wounds and make them bleed again."

You will speak so softly, and with the tears in your eyes, that the penitent souls will look to you as a kind of father—and you will be a helper to many. I do hope it is so with you who have returned to the Lord. I am so sorry, Brother. I am so sorry, Sister, that you have so spoiled and marred your life, for it would have been an infinitely better thing to have held on your way and gone from strength to strength, glorifying God by a consistent life. But, as you have made this great and grievous error, I pray you, do not despair! Believe in the mercy of God! He has forgiven the sin of His backsliding people and He can forgive yours. There is not only a bath in which to wash the sinner, but there is a fountain opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem—that is, for God's own people—that they may wash and be clean!

The other Thursday night, when some of you were not here, I preached about the bronze serpent. [See Sermon #1722, Volume 29—*The First Setting Up of the Bronze Serpent—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org*] You know how there came to be a bronze serpent—was it set up for outsiders? No, it was in consequence of the sin of God's own people, for they were "much discouraged because of the way," and they, "spoke against God, and against Moses." "Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among them, so that they were bitten, and many died." And when they repented, the bronze serpent was lifted up, that those who were bitten might look and live! They were not far from Canaan, yet they needed the bronze serpent. And you old Christians, you aged Believers, if you have been doing wrong, what a mercy it is for you that there is something better than a bronze serpent in the last day's march to Heaven and that, as you look to Him, you shall live! So, if you have been numbered among the people of God and yet have transgressed against Him, and have lost the joy of salvation—come back to Him, for the Savior's Sacrifice is available for you and God says concerning you, "They shall be as though I had not cast them aside."

When I get home at night, I never feel satisfied with any sermon that I have preached—in fact I have long ago given up all idea of preaching according to my own ideal of how it ought to be done—and when I get home, I say to myself, "You did not speak lovingly enough, you were not tender enough, you were not earnest enough." And when I get to bed, I lie and toss about and wish that I could get up and preach again! I daresay I would do it worse the second time, but, oh, I do wish I knew how to get at backsliders, or, indeed, at the heart of *any* man who has not yet come to the Savior. What better promise do you ever expect to have than this of my text? "They shall be as though I had not cast them aside." Could

God say anything more gracious than that to you? If you do not accept His mercy, it will look as if you were desperately set on being God's enemy! Let him do what he likes, I, for my part, cannot see what more God can say!

Now, supposing you refuse Him, then it shall be harder with you as you go on in sin. You are not very comfortable in your mind, even now. When you are obliged to be alone, you feel very miserable. When that dear child of yours was lately carried to the grave, you began to think—and you cannot bear to see yourself as you really are. You know that you have to hurry from one amusement to another and get into company so as to try to silence the voice of conscience. Now that you are not living near God and are not seeking Christ, you are unhappy. But you will be more unhappy, later, than you are at present! If you reject such terms as these, the guilt of your refusal will lie on your conscience and it will worry you more and more—and it ought to do so.

And then, what is worse, it may happen to you that some future day, when you come to die, this service, and even my poor feeble attempt to bring my Master's message to you, will come up before your mind's eye and you will say, "I was fairly bid to come and grand stipulations were made that it should be unto me as though God had never cast me aside, yet I would not come." Oh, such a reflection as that will make your death-pillow very hard!

And when you lift up your eyes, in the day of judgment, and find yourself about to be condemned by Christ, it will put a terrible sting into that just sentence as you think, "There was a time when mercy was within my reach. There was an hour when I stood on praying ground and pleading terms with God, and when the preacher, as best he could, pleaded with me, in God's name, and said that if I would repent, and return unto the Lord, it would be as though I had never been cast off because of my sin. Yet I would not have the mercy of God and I have perished by my own hands." Let it not be so, I implore you! There are those here whom I have looked for with eager heart. I have pleaded with them and I know that they are within an inch of decision—but that last inch is damning them! If they do not soon yield to Christ, they will perish. May God awaken them from their fatal slumber, even now, and unto His name shall be praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 51

A Psalm of David, after Nathan had rebuked him and he had been convinced of his great guilt in having sinned with Bathsheba. The music to which this Psalm can be sung must be composed of sighs, groans, sobs and cries. I believe that many of us here present have prayed this prayer of David many times—and he who has never prayed it has need to begin to do so at once! That is an old proverb, but a true one—"There is no road to Heaven except by Weeping Cross." He that has never repented will have to repent if he is ever to enter into life eternal. Hear, then, the prayer of David.

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God.* "Nothing but mercy will meet my case. Your justice frowns upon me. Your anger frightens me. 'Have mercy upon me'—great mercy, unmeasured mercy, undeserved mercy—'Have mercy upon me, O God.'"

1. *According to Your loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* David cannot stand himself while he reads the black record, so he prays, "Lord, blot it out! Blot it out from the sight of my eyes; but, chiefly, blot it out from Your eyes. Let not the record stand against me in Your Book of Remembrance. I cannot blot it out—not even with my blood, much less with my tears—but You can blot it out with a Savior's blood. Lord, blot it out, according to the multitude of Your tender mercies."

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.* You see, the Psalmist multiplies the expressions he uses because he sees the indelible character of sin apart from a miracle of mercy. "Wash me, O Lord! Water must be used, but if that will not cleanse me, then use fire! Use anything, only cleanse me. First, blot my sin out of Your book, and then blot it out of my nature. Take my sin away, O God! What can I do unless You wash me and cleanse me?"

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions.* That is the great point! There can be no cleansing, no washing, no blotting out of our guilt till there is a fair and square acknowledgment of it. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

3. *And my sin is always before me.* "Wherever I go, I see it, as though it were painted on my very eyeballs! I cannot see anything without seeing my sin! It stares me in the face—it is *always* before me."

4. *Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight.* Oh, what an awful thing, to commit adultery in the sight of God! It is horrible, but what must it be to commit *any* sin in the sight of God? Will a rebel talk treason in the presence of his king? Most men court the darkness that they may not be seen to do evil, but it is the venom of our sin that we commit it when God is present and looking on. Ah, me!

4. *That You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.* Another judge has to decide by the evidence that is brought before him, but *this Judge has seen* the evil for Himself. It was done before His very eyes and, therefore, He is clear when He judges.

5. *Behold, I was shaped in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.* "If I had not been bad, I would not have acted so badly. The streams betray the fountain. If I had not been wicked at the core, I would not have acted so wickedly, but the evil tree has brought forth evil fruit." It is well when actual sin leads us to feel the depth of our original and natural sin.

6. *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom.* The outward part is very important, but the inward part is much more so because the outward springs from the inward, and a man would not be outwardly guilty if he were not first inwardly evil. Hence, David cries for cleansing and truth and wisdom in the inward parts.

7. *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.* "Take the bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood of the lamb, and then purge me with it, and I shall be clean." What a wonderful faith this is! "I who am so black, I who am black as Hell, yet, if You but purge me with the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ, I shall be clean."

7. *Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* Again, I say, what grand faith this is! The faith which believes that another can be cleansed, is very easy. The faith which, in times of joy, believes that the soul can be cleansed, is very simple. But when guilt lies heavy on you and the hand of God seems to break you into pieces in His wrath, it is grand faith to be able to then say, "Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." May God give every sinner here that blessed faith!

8, 9. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.* "Do not look at my sins, Lord. Forget them! Turn Your back upon them and blot out all my iniquities." David comes back to his first prayer. "End my sins, Lord; blot them out, as when an account stands against a debtor, and the creditor erases it from the book. Do so with my sin."

10. *Create in me a clean, heart, O God.* Yes, we need our Creator to come and deal with us again. None but God can save us. The Omnipotence that made the heavens and the earth must be put forth to make us anew.

10. *And renew a right spirit within me.* Are you praying this prayer, dear Friend? Is your heart praying it while we read it?

11. *Cast me not away from Your Presence.* "Dismiss me not Your service, Lord." "Chase me not out of doors! Banish me not from where Your face may be seen—'Cast me not away from Your Presence.'"

11. *And take not Your Holy spirit from me.* "For, if You do, I am utterly undone. I shall go from bad to worse. I shall never repent. I shall never believe. I am as good as damned already if You take Your Holy Spirit from me! Therefore, O Lord, take not Your Spirit away from me."

12. *Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation.* "I had it once, Lord—restore it to me—bring it back."

12. *And uphold me with Your free Spirit.* "That I shall not turn aside again. O lift me up, and keep me up, and help me to rise higher and higher!"

13. *Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.* Pardoned sinners make fine preachers. The man who has never felt the burden of sin is not fit to preach to burdened souls. Oh, but when that burden is taken off our backs and our hearts, we are ready to leap for joy! Then we cry—

"Now will I tell to sinners round
What a dear Savior I have found!
I'll point to Your redeeming blood,
And say, 'Behold the way to God.'"

14. *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God.* It took David a long time to come to that point and to call his sin by its right name. He had really been the murderer of Uriah, but he tried to cover his guilt by saying, "The sword devours one as well as another." But now he tells the whole truth—"Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God."

14. *You are the God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* "Once let me get rid of my great sin and I will give You great praise. Wash my blood-guiltiness away with the blood of Jesus, and then I will never leave off proclaiming the glory of Your Grace."

15, 16. *O Lord, open my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it.* "Bullocks, rams, lambs—You care not for these."

16, 17. *You delight not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.* Come, poor souls, you that are heavy with guilt! You that lie at death's dark door, condemned by reason of a whole life of sin, offer to God this Sacrifice that He will not despise! The Jews brought their bullocks—you come and bring your broken hearts and contrite spirits! They presented to God the fat of fed beasts—you come and bring your broken-hearted groans, for God will not despise them!

18, 19. *Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering, and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.* If sin is pardoned, we may offer to God anything that we can, and He will accept it. But first of all we must get pardon—pardon through Jesus Christ—or else our offerings are a vain oblation. God bless the reading of this Psalm to everyone beneath this dome, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 51, 521, 616.

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

THE CHRISTIAN'S GLORIOUS INVENTORY
NO. 2589

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY MORNING, IN THE YEAR 1856.

"Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come— all are yours. And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." 1 Corinthians 3:21-23.

IT appears, from this Epistle, that the Christians at Corinth were very much divided on account of certain ministers who had, at different times, preached the Word of God among them. Some of them felt a deep attachment to Paul and they said, "We are of Paul." Others preferred Cephas and they cried, "We are of Cephas," while another portion followed after Apollos and declared, "We are of Apollos." So that the Church, which ought to have been one body, was sadly torn and divided by several parties who followed different leaders. Paul wrote this first Epistle to the Corinthians in order to remove their strifes and, if possible, to bind them, again, in the bonds of love and unity—to make of them one Church, serving one Master, striving together for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Now, Beloved, the same thing that occurred in Corinth has happened in London and elsewhere many a time. It is but right that persons should feel an attachment to those who preach the Gospel to them. But when this grows to an overwhelming adoration—when it becomes almost a worship and persons are led to despise all other ministers and will hear none besides that one man whom they believe to be sent from God—then, indeed, they need a solemn reproof as did these Corinthians—and it is requisite to say to them, "Therefore, let no man glory in men. For all things are yours." To love the man by whose means we are brought to know the Truth of God, to have respect to him who speaks wondrous words, as God makes utterance by him is, indeed, nothing but natural and just. But if we at any time exalt that man above the level he ought to stand, or put him above all others, so that we despise them and say, "I am of Paul and will not hear Apollos," or, "I am of Apollos and, therefore, cannot hear Cephas"—then it becomes a sin and iniquity, a transgression against God, against His Church and against His ministers. And the Apostle's solemn reproof comes home with an emphasis—"Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos,

or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come."

Paul was a wise reprover and he did not reprove too sharply. After he had said, "Let no man glory in men," mark how he reproved them—"For all things are yours." He used no hard words. We have heard of ministers who are perpetually whipping and scolding their hearers. It is an old saying of those who understood horses as well as men, "The best way is to put the whip in the manger." Feed people well and they will work well. Give them plenty of sound Doctrine and it will make them practical It is not the way to make a practical people to be always talking about practice. Feed them with the manna that comes down from Heaven—and with some of the honey out of the rock—and they will always be willing to strive for their Master and to labor for His cause.

Now, Christian, rise and walk through the length and breadth of the land, this morning, and view your possessions! Nothing will tend so much to lessen your undue reverence for men, or to check your glorying in them, as a vision of what you are, yourselves, worth! If you see your own property, your own possessions, you will not, then, be so much inclined to place too high a value upon one certain thing, though it may be, in itself, exceedingly precious.

First of all, we have before us *an inventory of the Christian's possessions.* "All things are yours." Secondly, we have *the title deed.* "You are Christ's and Christ is God's." And, thirdly, we have *the conduct expected from a man who is so exceedingly rich.* "Let no man glory in men."

I. First, I said, we have AN INVENTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN'S POSSESSIONS. The Apostle sets down at the top the total of the whole, and then he proceeds to mention the possessions one by one. The sum total is "all things," but as these two words are said very quickly and are very general in their meaning, he particularizes, and gives each of the things in its proper place. First he says, "all things," and then he gives us a list which includes "all things."

And, first, he says that *all ministers are yours.* As a Christian, all kinds of ministers are yours, "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas." All preachers are not Pauls. All are not like Apollos and all cannot speak like Cephas. But ministers of all kinds are yours—they are not their own, they belong to the Church at large. There is Paul. He has a clear, logical mind. He preaches good doctrine and proclaims it powerfully. He is yours, go and hear him! There is Apollos who preaches with eloquence. He is not so much a logician as an orator. He cannot reason, perhaps, but he puts his thoughts into beautiful shapes and delivers them well. Go and hear Apollos! There is rough Cephas, a plain, blunt, honest, outspoken man. He never minces matters. What he says, he says out of his heart, "*con amore*"—his whole soul goes with every word. Do not despise him. You may like Paul, better, and Apollos may be more to your taste, but Cephas has his work to do as well—and all are yours—their talents, their station, whatever they possess—all are yours!

You sometimes speak of "my minister." Yes, you have a particular minister, but then all ministers are yours—not only that special one, but all who are called of God! Whatever may be their peculiar mode of

preaching, they are yours to profit by, if, indeed, they are God's servants. There is Boanerges—he preaches in a thundering manner of the wrath to come. His sermons alarm you. He drags a harrow across your soul. He speaks as if he had just come from the top of Sinai where the thunders of God were pealing and the lightning flashing beneath his feet! He speaks like a man impressed with solemn awe, as if he had, for a while, traversed the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, and had descended into the abyss of Hell and seen the horrid pits where the wicked lie and bite their bonds. Hear him, *he is yours.*

Here is another, a Barnabas who speaks words of gentle comfort. You seldom hear thunder from him. His preaching is like the soft evening breeze. He is like the sun that has healing beneath its wings, gently he speaks to the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds. You love to hear him. He is quite as useful as Boanerges and Boanerges is as useful as Barnabas—*and they are both yours.* One is a loving John, sweet in his disposition. You can read love in his eyes. He has leaned his head on the bosom of Jesus and when he speaks, he says, "I beseech you, love one another." Another is like Peter. He speaks terribly of the last days wherein shall come scoffers—and of the fire which shall consume the ungodly. Both Peter and John have their special province—*and they are both yours.*

When God has blessed a man, when there is an unction from the Holy One resting on him, when he can trace his descent from the Apostles by being a follower of the Apostles and preaching Apostolic Doctrine in an Apostolic manner, then, indeed, you may say he is yours, for, "all are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas." "Then how little and narrow-minded I am," perhaps the Christian will say, "that I have not cared for this or that man because he was not exactly after my mode!" O dear Creatures, would you have the making of God's ministers? A sorry lot they would be if you had! God makes them as He pleases, and sends them into the world after His own fashion, each with his own work to do in his own manner—but they are all yours! There is a minister who preaches very sweetly. Well, he is yours, he is your servant, your waiting-man! He is not a lord and master over you, but your servant. "Ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." Whoever he is, if he is a true minister of God, he will profess himself to be the servant of the Church, your positive property. Make all the use you can of him, then. Try and remember all the good things he may say—whatever choice utterances, whatever golden sentences and silver words come from his lips, treasure them up—for they are all yours, whether they are the words of Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas. This is the first entry in the inventory.

And, next, *"the world"* is ours. This great world, considered naturally, the home wherein we live, is all ours. Men have carved it out for themselves. Worldlings have said, "So much is mine, and so much is yours. Yonder fields belong to that rich man. And the houses there and that park belong to such another." They may call it theirs if they like, but the world is yours! It is yours as much as if you had a legal title to it here below. It is yours, not in imagination, or conception, but in reality. Do you ask me how it is? I tell you, the world only exists for you! If you and all

your fellow Christians were gone out of it. If the righteous were departed, the world would at once be a desert. "You are the salt of the earth"—the conservers, the preservers of it—it abides for your sake! Take *you* away and the world would be turned into rottenness and perish! The world is but the scaffold of your soul's salvation—it is but the place where you prepare yourselves to enter into the world above. This world would have been consumed by fire long ago if it had not been for the righteous. God bids the flames tarry till He has taken all His children Home! He only keeps the world in existence for the sake of His elect! It is a debased world, the trail of the serpent is all over it. It is spoiled, its beauty is marred, it is a fair world but a false one, its glory is departed. God would utterly destroy it but that He intends His Church to be fostered in the wilderness and He will not sweep the wilderness away till He has carried His people through it. This world is yours—there is not a speck of it which is not yours! The whole of it is yours, from the East to the West, and from the North to the South. The lands of virgin snows are yours. The wide, expansive ocean is yours. Yon blue sky with all its gems of stars is yours. "All things are yours." One man says of a certain part, "That is mine!" He knows not what he says—it is yours! It is let to him for a little while. He occupies it as a tenant. He is only the man who takes care of your house for you. It is your house, though he lives in it and enjoys the comfort of it. He stretches himself on the couch, but the house is yours—and it shall be yours, by-and-by, when Jesus Christ shall come a second time, without sin unto salvation, and shall reign gloriously upon the earth with His ancients! Then shall you wear a crown and shall be made a king and a priest unto your God, and shall reign with Christ upon the earth for a thousand years!

This world is yours *now*. "No, but," you say, "I am poor and have but little of it." It is yours, notwithstanding, only you are not yet come of age. The son, before he is of full age, is as truly the heir of all the property as he will be when he comes into full possession of it. He has enough for his necessities, but not more, but still, he says, "It is mine. And when the day shall come that I am twenty-one, I shall have it all." So, Christian, you are at present only a child, and it would not do to give you all your property at once. You are not come of age, but when you have passed through your time of probation, you shall say, "It is mine." But did I hear you say that you have not enough of this world's necessities? Hush, be silent, or else the promise is broken, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." I know you have enough. Or, if you have not enough at present, yet it is coming to you. God will not leave you! If He brings you ever so low in poverty, still trust Him, for His promise is engaged to supply your needs. "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Try your Lord by faith. If you have no employment, no means of providing for yourself, yet ask Him and He will give you all you need. If you have no place to lay your head, God will provide it for you. However deep your distresses may be, He will never let you perish. His honor is engaged on your behalf and He will take care of you. Poor as you are, this world is yours! Draw, then, on your Heavenly Banker—go and ask your God for what you need—and as

truly as He is God, He will hear the cry of the destitute and will not despise your prayer.

And next, "life" is ours. Have you ever heard a person say, "Oh, if I might but die, and depart, and be with Jesus"? And you have heard him, sometimes, repeat the Psalmist's wish, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove!" Now, if he had wings like a dove, what would he do with them? Where would he put them? "Oh," he says, "that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest." No, you would not be at rest, for if you were to fly away before your work was done, you could not rest even then! But when your work is done, then you will be at rest without needing the wings of a dove. Therefore do not make such a silly request any more, but be content to wait and tarry the Lord's time. Moreover, look not upon life as an evil thing—it is one of the good things we possess. It is a glorious life, after all, when a man knows how to enjoy it and how to improve it. What? Be ashamed to live here when you have such means of doing good and glorifying God, and such pleasant seasons of communion with Jesus, and such preparations for eternity? What? Count life nothing? It is one of the greatest blessings we possess! And to stay here till our portion of labor shall be done is a blessing—nor would we wish to have our lives shortened by a single hour, for God has predestinated the time for its end.

I think that man who does not reckon life a blessing has morbid views. With all its trials and sorrows, it is still a precious gem—it may be set in a ring of iron—but it is still a gem! Life may be hidden in the depths, like a rare pearl, but he that, by faith, can act the part of a diver, will fetch the pearl up and see its value. I think an angel in Heaven might be glad to live on earth for the good he might do. If I may be the means of saving souls from Hell. If I can wipe away the mourner's tears. If God shall help me to bind up the broken in heart and to set free the prisoner. If my fellow man, by my means, can be led in the paths of righteousness. If souls can be snatched from Hell and heirs of earth be made heirs of Heaven by my staying here, then, O God, let me live! I think the life of Methuselah were well purchased, and that we might well tolerate even such a long delay from Heaven if we could serve God better by staying here. Do not look upon life as a curse, Christian! Count it a blessing and seek to make it so. It will be full of weeds and thistles to you if you do not plow it. But if you plow life with persevering industry and earnestness, you will make it like a garden of the Lord. You can make the wilderness blossom like Eden and the desert shall be a very Carmel for joy, so that the mountains and hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands! Yes, Paul was right when he wrote of life as a blessing, for a blessing it certainly is.

The next thing does not seem to be of any value at all—*"or death."* But, Beloved, what would life be worth if it were not for death? There are some books that have only plain black letters till you come to the, "Finis," which is illuminated. So it is often with life—it is printed in black letters till you come to the last leaf—but that page is lit up with glory, for that page is death! O Life, I would call you a curse if I could not see Death behind you! To live here always—who would wish it? To walk perpetually

upon this earth and to dwell here absent from the Lord, and present in the body—*that* were, indeed, a curse! But life is a blessing because after life comes death. Yes, death, itself, is a blessing to the Christian! Usually, we look at death, not so much as what it is, as what it appears to be. Death is an angel, the fairest in creation! But Death sometimes dresses itself in terrible garments. It *appears* to be terrible, but it is not. Moreover, we think death to be dreadful because we do not see the whole of death. You know why Belshazzar trembled when he saw the handwriting on the wall—it was because he could see nothing but the hand—he could not see the body. That is why we are afraid of the hand of death, because we see nothing but the hand. If we could see the whole of death, we would count it a cherub! Death, indeed, is not a dreary thing to those who believe in Jesus—those who know how to commune with death from day to day will never be afraid of talking or thinking of it. It is the gate to endless joy—and do we dread to enter there? What is it? The grave is a bath where my body shall, like Esther, bathe itself in spices until its Lord shall say, "Awake!" And I shall rise from my grave, clothed in immortality and glory, to dwell with Him forever!

Death, I have often trembled at you! In midnight hours I have thought it must be terrible to die, and I have shaken at your pale apparition. O Death, your ghastly appearance has sometimes frightened me! I have tried to run away from you, but you are now my slave and I will not tremble at you any more. Death, you are mine! I write you down among my goods and chattels, a part of my property. Take heed how you try to make your master tremble—you are not my master, Death—I am yours! Come here, give me your hand, O Death! Be it mine to talk with myself every day and to talk with you, too. It does us good to see the crossbones and skull and to note in the graveyard the remnants of mortality. It is beneficial to our spirits to look down and see that, however high our powers, our heads must be laid low. However lofty our appearance, we must bend down and our body must become a carnival for worms and must be scattered like the dust of the highway to the four winds of Heaven! It is good to think of that and then to think, with all its gloom, with all that is dismal about it—death is ours!

Oh, it is pleasant to think well of death! I have heard of a good Christian who was asked if she was afraid to die. She replied, "I have dipped my foot in the river Jordan every morning before breakfast for these 40 years and I am not afraid of the current." It is good to die, at last, when we know what it is to die every day. Paul said, "I die daily." Well, if we die every day, it will not be hard to die in our last day. You will not be afraid of death if you love the Lord. If you knew death, Believer, you would not be afraid of it, but you would feel it to be a joyous thing. You are thinking of that lonely chamber where the friends stand by your side when you bid them all adieu—you are thinking of the pains and groans and strife—and the dread solemnity of that last hour. But think not of such things! Think, instead, that the Lord will come to meet you, for He will come and your soul will stretch its wings in haste and fly away to Heaven! Would you be afraid to die with Jesus? You would not be afraid if you stood where I sometimes stand, by the bedside of the dying saint. I have taken

the hand of such an one and he has said to me, "Brother, this is the place to prove that the Lord is gracious. I am going to be with Jesus! My heart and strength fail me, but He is the strength of my life and my portion forever." And his eyes have flashed with the very fire of Glory! His lips have breathed sonnets, his looks spoke volumes, his heart seemed overflowing with the bliss of eternity—and his whole soul radiant with immortality! Oh, it is a cheering thing to stand by when a Christian dies, to see him stand on the precipice of life, clapping his wings before he takes his flight, not into a vast unknown, but into a sea of light and love in which he floats until he reaches the gates of Paradise! It is doubly sweet and blessed to witness such a spectacle of joy. Death is ours, then, so we will not fear it, for it is, indeed, a privilege to die one day!

Then, next, *"things present" are* ours. Come, Beloved, let us see what are our "things present" today. One says, "Prosperity is one of my things present. The Lord is blessing me in this world and I have many joys, many comforts, nothing to complain of, everything to be thankful for." Well, that is yours, but take care, my Brother, that you make it yours to profit by. Alas, prosperity has something of the same effect upon the soul which the holidays of Capua had upon the Roman soldiers—it weakens the soul and takes away its power. Do not let it be so with you! It need not be so, for if, by the working of God's Spirit, you are sanctified, prosperity may be of use to you, for it is one of the things present that is yours.

"Ah," says another, *"adversity* is present with me. I am suffering excruciating pain in my body and my circumstances are not what I wish them to be. I am exceedingly pained and driven to and fro. I am like a poor seabird, lost in the wide ocean, tossed up and down from the base of the waves to the billows' crown." Adversity is yours. It will do you good, Brother—it will help to gird up your loins and brace your nerves and sinews—it will strengthen you for labor. God has put you in the furnace, "your dross to consume, and your gold to refine." Look on adversity as a blessing. In everything give God thanks, as much for your trials as for your joys, as much for your temptations as for your deliverances, as much for the bitters in your cup as for the sweets, for the same loving hand that put the one there, mingled the other! All "things present" are yours.

Then there is *Providence.* That is always present and it is yours. "All things work together for good to them that love God." Then there is *justification.* That is a present mercy—"Therefore, being justified by faith, *we have peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." That is yours. Then here is *the Bible,* that is a present thing, and it is yours. There is not a precious promise in it, from Genesis to Revelation, but it is yours—there is not a single choice sentence in it, but it is yours. All "things present" belong to you. What else is there? Why, there is *adoption,* for you are now children of God. That is yours. There is *final perseverance,* which God promises even now. He will keep His children and preserve them to the end. That is yours, and whatever you can conceive that is glorious, which is present with you now, is yours!

But now comes the climax—*"things to come."* These are also yours! What? Are you trembling at the "things to come"? Are you saying, "I dread the future. My poor ship has borne so many storms, I fear to go forward"? Oh, tremble not, the future is yours and, if it should be a future of storms and hurricanes, and tempests and rocks, and quicksand and shoals, it is yours, but your Captain will steer you through! Let *death* be in the future, with its shade and gloom, it is yours. It is one of the "things to come." Then, after death, the lying in the grave for a time is yours. The *resurrection,* when you shall arise from the grave, is yours. The awful trumpet blast that shall startle the world, the books that are to be opened, the blazing lightning, the terrific thunders are yours. The trembling universe, with all the dread accompaniments *of judgment,* is yours. The Judge, Himself, is yours—your Brother, your Friend!

And the great conflagration, the flying away of Heaven and of earth, the falling of the stars from Heaven like withered fig leaves from the tree—all these are yours, too. The rocking of creation, the tossing to and fro of matter, the earthquake, the trembling spheres, the shaking universe, the dissolving orbs—all these are yours—all that is terrible, majestic, sublime, terrific! All is yours. Let your imagination gather around it all the dread things which are to come. All these are yours. Your soul, enshrined in immortality, shall say, "It is all mine." The great dread drama which shall receive its terrible consummation after death is yours. If there is a Hell that is horrible to the wicked—as there most assuredly is—it is *not* for you! But if there is a Heaven, glorious and great as it is, it is for you! There is a harp in Heaven which is yours. A crown in Heaven which is yours. Think of the streets of gold, they are yours, for they are "things to come." Think of the Most High God, Himself—He is yours! And you shall feel Him to be so. O Christian! Heaven is yours! Try, Beloved, to picture Heaven to yourself. I think I hear you say, "Is this Heaven, and am I there? Have I a crown upon my head? Am I clad in white? O glorious world! I never conceived Heaven to be like this! I had pictures, I had dreams, I had imaginations, but this far outshines all that I ever conceived! O wondrous Heaven, how glorious you are! And there is my Christ!"

I know not what you will say of Him—it were almost blasphemy to try to utter words about Him—but when you are with Him, lying on His breast forever, feeling His heart palpitating against yours and knowing that the God-Man has loved you with an everlasting love, and feeling that His heart is forever yours by the sweetest tie of blessed relationship—then you will find that "things to come" are yours, for Heaven has become your actual possession! This, then, is the Christian's glorious inventory! He is rich, indeed, who owns all these things and who can take up this language—"all things are mine whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come."

II. Now, we come to THE TITLE DEEDS. They are drawn up in the name of Christ—"you are Christ's and Christ is God's."

As I am, by nature, apart from Christ, none of those things are mine—they are all against me. Death would not be mine without Christ—it would be, indeed, a terrible doom! Life is not mine without Christ—that

were dangerous, indeed, to live here without Him. All I have comes to me through Jesus. Come, then, let me look at the title deeds and see if I am interested in them. They consist of two parts. First, "you are Christ's," and secondly, "Christ is God's."

"You are Christ's." Come, Christian, soliloquize thus with yourself—"My Soul, are you Christ's? Can you say that you are His in a threefold sense? Are you Christ's by the Father's donation of you to Christ? Are you Christ's by the purchase of His blood? And are you Christ's by your own consecration of yourself to Him? Am I Christ's *by eternal donation* because God the Father gave me to the Son? Can I look back and see my name written in life's fair book? Can I, with holy faith, look back and see the roll of destiny and read my name therein? Have I a humble, holy faith that I was given to the Lord long before the foundations of the earth were laid, or the pillars thereof were piled? Am I His? Can I say, "This Covenant, made of old, stands forever fast"? Can I say that I was given to Him? Do I rejoice in that sovereign electing love which gave me to the Savior for no reason whatever in *me*, but simply of His own Grace? If so, that is one proof that I am Christ's!

"But again, my Soul, can you look back and see yourself to be Christ's *by the purchase of His blood?* When you go to Gethsemane, do those drops of gore fall upon the ground for you? When you go to Gabbatha, can you think that ignominy and plucking of the hair was for you? And at Calvary, can you feel that all its agonies and terrors were for you?

Do *you* feel, dear Friends, that you are Christ's by the purchase of His blood? At a Primitive Methodist prayer meeting, a Brother was not able to pray and somebody else, further down in the meeting, according to their rather disorderly manner, called out, "Brother plead the blood, plead the blood! Then you will be able to pray!" The Brother understood well enough—he began pleading the blood of Jesus and then he could, indeed, pray! O my Soul, can you plead the blood? My hearer, can you plead the blood? My Brother, my Sister, can you say that the Sacrifice of Jesus was for you? Do you feel that He bought you and paid for you, that His Sacrifice was made for your guilt, that He died especially for your sins? Can you appropriate Jesus to yourself? If so, you can appropriate *everything*, since "you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

But, further, we are Christ's *by consecration.* Beloved, are *you* thus Christ's? "Do know the place, the plot of ground, where you met Jesus?" Ah, some of us can look back and tell to an inch, the spot where we first gave our hearts to Jesus! Many of the Lord's people cannot do it and it is not necessary that they should, but yet they can, each one, say, "I am my Lord's and He is mine." Do you feel, this morning, that you have given yourself to the Lord Jesus. That you are not your own, but, being bought with a price, you have willingly given yourself to Him? Have you taken Christ for your All-in-All and have you given up all to Christ? If Christ were to walk up this aisle and come to each one of you, and say, "Sinner, do you love Me?" What answer would you give Him? If He were now to step from pew to pew and look at each of you, showing you His scarred hands with the print of the nails, and asking, "Will you give yourself to Me?" What would your answer be? Do you wish to give yourselves up

wholly to Christ? Have you done so? Then, "all things are yours" because you are Christ's! By consecration you have given yourselves to Him.

If you consecrate yourselves to Jesus, you will never find Him a hard Master. I have known Him some little while and He has been exceedingly kind to His unworthy servant. I have nothing in which to find fault with Him, but much with myself. He is a blessed Master. O youth, or maiden, if you would love Him, you would find Him worthy of your love in all respects! Why, I think His very name is enough to make you love Him! "My Master! How sweetly does 'my Master' sound! Yes, He is my Master and your Master if you have become His servant and have given yourselves to Him. But, if you are not Christ's, you have nothing—you are a poor miserable creature! How can you live if you are not Christ's? How will you face grim death? How will you stand before Christ when He shall sit on His Throne? Do you think that you shall be able to hear His thundering voice say, "Depart, you cursed"? Are your ribs of steel, and bones of brass? If they are, they will be broken when He speaks in His wrath! O then, Beloved, "Kiss the Son, lest He is 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."

I must only hint at the other portion. In order to link us thoroughly with God, there is something else besides our being Christ's, and that is, "Christ is *God's."* With one hand Christ links Himself to men, with the other He is joined to God. And thus God and men are united. Oh, think of this! There is a link between you and the Godhead! The God that you cannot conceive of—the hem of whose garments are dark with ineffable light, too splendid for man to view—that mighty God, filling immensity, the Infinite, the All Things in One, is linked with you! Christ gives you His hand—He is your Brother, flesh and blood like yourself—and He gives God His hand, for He is the equal of the Eternal, the infinite God, very God of very God, and yet, very Man of very Man! Oh, what a glorious thought, that my deed is stamped by the Father and by the Son! It has the seal of Them both! "You are Christ's and Christ is God's." And having Christ and being Christ's, I have all things in Him. "All things are yours. For you are Christ's and Christ is God's."

Before I come to the third point, let me ask you, dear Friends, to put this question to your conscience. *Are you Christ's?* Oh, how many there are who attend God's House and never feel any personal application of the Truth of God! How many are there of you who sit Sunday after Sunday, and weekday after weekday hearing sermons and never getting any profit from them? O Sirs, preaching is not child's play! Some persons say, "I will go and hear Mr. So-and-So," and they go—just to amuse themselves! Do you think that a true minister will preach to amuse you? Is it his business to do so? Oh, believe me, it is solemn work to stand and speak for God and in His name! Did you ever think what it is to preach God's Word? Oh, if at the Last Great Day it shall be shown that we have not preached faithfully to you, if we have not declared the whole counsel of God, you, indeed, must perish, but your blood will be required at our hands!

And then, do you know what solemn work it is to hear? Oh, if the damned spirits in Hell could come to earth, they would let you know what solemn work it is to hear the Gospel! Think not that you can hear the Gospel without having your salvation or damnation affected—there is not a Word of the Gospel that ever enters into man's ear for which he shall not be brought to account! I beseech you, as you believe in the Bible, as you believe that there is no salvation out of Christ, to lay these things to heart! They are not trifles, they are not imaginary things, they are not that which concerns your body—they concern your eternal existence! You are rich, or else you are poor. You are Christ's or the devil's! You are on the road to Heaven or to Hell—which is it? Oh, let the question ring through your *ears—which is it, Heaven or Hell? Which is it?* HEAVEN OR HELL? Oh, let not that question, if it is ever so harshly spoken, be rejected by you! Answer the question to your soul and if you are honestly obliged to say, "I fear I am on the road to Hell," then remember, if you feel *that*—if you confess your sin, Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Not everybody, but, "sinners"—all those who will acknowledge and confess that title shall be saved by Divine Grace! If you are a sinner and you trust Him, He will most assuredly and certainly save you!

III. Now, lastly, WHAT IS THE DUTY OF A MAN WHO HAS SUCH LARGE POSSESSIONS? "Let no man glory in men. For all things are yours."

If a man has everything, he has no need to glory in some one little thing. If a man has only one gold ring, you will see him wearing it on his finger every day—and putting his hand in such a position that everybody may see it. But he who has far more, need not be particular about just one ring being seen! Does the Queen care that other people know what plate and jewels she has at Windsor? Everybody knows that she is rich, that she has an abundance and, therefore, it is not necessary that she should display a portion of it. Whenever you find a person glorying in some little thing, you may be sure he is acting contrary to what he should be. I cannot conceive how a Christian man, who has everything, can be proud because he has a little talent, or a little wealth, or position, or station! Do not be proud of that, but say, "That is one stone in my estate—it is one little pebble that lies in one of the brooks in my large domains. True, it is mine, but it is nothing to boast of." "Let no man glory in men. For all things are yours." Do not be boasting, then, about one thing when all things are yours! The little child, when it has a present, shows it to every person who comes into the house, but when the child becomes a man, he shows not everything that he has, yet he has more possessions than he had before. Thus the worldling may glory in his riches and boast of his strength, but, Christians, you are too far advanced for this—you are too wise, "for all things are yours"—and surely you will not attach undue importance to one.

Now, what does this subject say practically to you? One of you has lost a friend. You are weeping and saying, "I have lost everything." No, you have not—"for all things are yours." He may have been a precious

friend, a most loving one that you have lost. It may be a deep trial, but *think what you have.* You have God! Your sins are forgiven! You have the righteousness of Christ! You have not lost that. It is only some pennies which are gone—your gold is safe, your jewels are not taken away. "But I have lost my jewels," you say. Have you? Ah, then, you do not know Christ, for you would not venture to call anything a jewel except the precious Lord Jesus! Is it not wrong for you to bemoan and weep so perpetually when "all things are yours"? Another one is expecting such-and-such a relative to be taken away and is weeping over an expected loss. Now you have no promise to help you, for you weep before your trouble comes! God does not promise that He will help you who manufacture your own troubles. Remember, you cannot lose the title deeds of your possessions. If you have lost your copy, you can get another, for the old deed is up in the ark in Heaven!

Now, by way of a practical hint, I might say, if "all things are yours," *how willing you ought to be to give something to the cause of God!* A man who is poor and has nothing is never expected to give. But a man who has "all things," should give like a prince! There are many princes in Israel who have all things in their possession and I am sure I may ask them to give something for the Lord's cause.

But I again come back to this all-important question—we must not put it away. We must give an answer to it, either now, or at God's bar—*Are we Christ's?* Some of you, I fear, are not Christ's. You are none of His because your conversation is carnal, your actions are worldly, your behavior is inconsistent and your lives are reproachable. Then, you are not Christ's. Some of you are not Christ's because you are trusting in your own righteousness and not leaning on the blood and righteousness of Christ alone. But we hope that there are some of you who have stripped yourselves of everything and have taken Christ for your All-in-All. If, devoid of all goodness, you make Christ your goodness—if, devoid of everything, you take Christ for all, then He is yours. Hence, you may revel in delights and let your heart leap for joy! Let your melancholy be dissipated and your tears be all dried up! You may rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory, for this world is yours, the world to come is yours and Heaven shall be your happy home forever!

The Lord grant that it may be so with all of you when He shall make up His jewels! Amen.

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

HEARING, SEEKING, FINDING
NO. 2590

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 2, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 24, 1883.

"Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the woods. We will go into His tabernacles: we will worship at His footstool." Psalm 132:6, 7.

LONG before David's time, the Ark of the Lord had been almost forgotten by the children of Israel. It formed a most important part of the Ceremonial Law which God had ordained. I may almost call it the central portion of that pattern which was shown to Moses in the mountain. But the Ark had been carried into captivity by the Philistines and, afterwards, the terrible judgment worked upon the men of Beth-Shemesh may have made many afraid to go near it. So it remained a long time in Kirjath-Jearim and there David found it. And, after leaving it for a while at the house of Obed-Edom, brought it up to Jerusalem with great rejoicing. David's heart was so full of zeal for God that he desired that every part of the Lord's worship should be carried out with due order and proper solemnity. He wished to see a sanctuary built in which the Ark of the Lord should rest in its place and the worship of God should be carried out as He judged was meet and fit.

The first thing, therefore, for David to do was to find the Ark, for, as I have already said, it was a central portion of the Divinely-ordained Ceremonial Law. The Ark was put away in the Most Holy Place and it was an express and notable symbol of the Presence of God among the people. It was there, from above the Mercy Seat, that God met with man and communed with him in the person of the High Priest. It was there that the Shekinah glory, denoting the special Presence of God, shone forth between the cherubim. It is clear, therefore, that if David meant to restore the worship of God to its due and proper order, his first business was to find the Ark. Yet, without forgetting that fact, I am not going to talk so much about David finding the Ark as to think of some who are in the condition in which I once was. When I desired to find God, I longed to meet with Him, in the Person of Christ, in His own appointed way, but I could not find Christ. My heart was dark, my eyes were blind and I looked everywhere but in the right place. I did not look where the true Light of God was shining. But, at last, I resolved that I must find Him and I did, by His Grace, find Him! I found Him where I little expected to find Him and now, having found Him, myself, I have it on my heart to come and speak to everyone who is saying, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" It may be that my message shall be like the voice that

reached poor Hagar in the wilderness, when she and her son were ready to perish with thirst, though there was a well of water close at hand. As the Lord said to her, "What ails you, Hagar?" so would I ask, "What ails you, poor seeking Soul, when Christ is so near?" His people will breathe a prayer for you that you may find Him even while I speak to you.

I. My first remark will be that, LIKE DAVID, WE WISH TO FIND THE ARK, THAT ARK BEING CHRIST.

Dear Friends, most here present—and I should suppose, all—are well instructed as to where God will meet with us as our reconciled God. The *symbol* was the Ark of the Covenant. And the Mercy Seat, the *reality,* we know is Christ. We know this, I say, for most of us have been instructed in the Scriptures from our youth up. Oh, that we all knew it in our hearts!

Now, concerning that Ark, the first point to be noted is that it was covered with *a golden Mercy Seat* which was the place of forgiveness when it was sprinkled with the sacrificial blood. Those who came to it, through the High Priest, knew that God had accepted them and forgiven their sins. You and I know that we can never meet with God except at the Mercy Seat which is Christ Jesus, the Lord! Christ made an Atonement, a Propitiation, for our sins—He "offered Himself without spot to God." Though in Him was no sin, yet He was made sin for us. For our sake He came under the curse of the broken Law of God and now, if we want to meet with God, it must be at the Mercy Seat, by the Propitiation which Christ has made. You say that you know this is the case—then never try to meet God anywhere else, for remember that He is a consuming fire! There is no safety in making any attempt to come to God except by Christ Jesus, the one Mediator between God and men. His pierced body, that torn veil, is the only means of access for a sinner to a holy God!

In addition to this, the Ark was not only a Mercy Seat, but it was *a Throne of Grace.* God sat there, as it were, upon a throne of mercy and to us, today, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Throne of Grace. God in Christ Jesus is our reigning God, stretching out the silver scepter of His mercy and accepting all who come to Him. Do you want to pray, poor Soul, so that God will hear you? Then plead the blood of Christ! Do you wish to pour out your burdened spirit before the God of Grace? Then come with the name of Christ in your mouth and His blood trusted in your heart—and you shall not be refused! There is no meeting place with God, there is no place for prevailing prayer, but where you meet God in the Person of Jesus Christ the one great Sin-Offering!

Then, further, the Ark was *the place of God's Manifestation.* As much as could be seen of the Glory of God was seen between the cherubim. It is said that a bright light *always* rested there as a token of Jehovah's perpetual Presence—and if you would see the Glory of God, you must look into the face of Jesus Christ. "No man can see God's face and live." But we may see the face of Christ and live by seeing it! But only through the veil of Christ's Humanity can we see it. I have noticed that when men look at the sun, it has to be through smoked glass. And when we look at God, it must be through the Incarnation of Christ, who was found in fashion as a Man, though He thought it not a prize to be grasped to be equal with God.

Furthermore, David knew, and you also know, that there were within the Ark three notable things—first, *the tablets of stone* which God had ordered to be placed there for preservation. There was, next, *the golden pot with manna.* And then there was also *Aaron's rod that budded.* Now, if you come to Christ, you will find in Him all that these things represented and all that you need.

First, there is preserved *the complete, vindicated and honored Law of God.* You will never be able, in your own strength, to keep the Law of the Lord—you will break it as surely as you live. Yet you cannot be accepted without a perfect righteousness! Unless God sees you clothed in the garments of righteousness, He will never admit you to the wedding feast. So where are you to get that spotless robe? It is in Christ, for faith is imputed for righteousness to him who believes in the Son of God, even as Abraham believed in God and it was accounted to him for righteousness! But how is righteousness imputed to the guilty? Why, the Believer lays hold of the righteousness of Jesus Christ and it is reckoned as if it were his own! "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." That "One" is the Lord, our Righteousness, and when we put on His robe of righteousness, we stand before God, "holy as the Holy One." If, then, you need a perfect Law, you will only find it in Christ. If any say that they have it in themselves, I believe that is only setting up another and a false Christ, for it is a derogation to the special Glory of Christ, of whom alone it can be said that He has magnified the Law and made it honorable by keeping it perfectly! I have no righteousness in and of myself, nor has any child of God any of his own—any that we once *thought* we had, we do count but dross and dung—that we may win Christ and be found in Him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. Oh, how we need, then, to find the Ark, Christ Jesus, that we may see, there, the unbroken tablets of the Law of God!

But every child of God also needs *spiritual food.* If the Lord has quickened you, He has given you hunger with your new life, for spiritual hunger always goes with spiritual life and you are saying, "Oh, that I might but eat of the crumbs that the little dogs get under their master's table—I must have some spiritual meat!" You will never have it till you get where the golden pot of manna is to be found. There is the food of the saints treasured up in Christ! There is no food for a soul even in Heaven except in Christ Jesus. He is the Manna, of which, if a man eats, he shall live forever! This shall satisfy his soul, strengthen him, build him up and develop him into a perfect man in Christ Jesus! But you must come to Christ for the food that was typified by the golden pot full of manna.

I think that I hear someone say, "I remember that a third thing that was in the Ark was Aaron's rod that budded. And that reminds me that I need *a power that can rule me,* that can say to my rebellious passions, 'Be still,' and that can make me walk in the way of God's commands, even bringing every wandering thought into captivity." Well, there is no rod that I know of that can rule our rebellious nature but the rod of Christ Jesus, the great High Priest of God! Once let that blessed rod be all-powerful over us, and with it shall come all manner of buds, blossoms

and ripe fruit to our soul. Jesus said, "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." Only from that rod can come the perfect fruit-bearing that every true child of God desires to produce!

II. This leads me to my second remark, which is that knowing what we do about Christ, the Ark, WE DESIRE TO FIND HIM.

I hope that I am addressing some who could even use the language of David and say that they intensely desire to find Him. They cry to the mighty God of Jacob in their affliction and with their whole heart and soul they long to find Christ! David made a vow about it, for his heart was set upon finding the Ark. Dear Friend, is *your* heart set upon finding Christ, or are you merely trifling with Him? Have you been so thoroughly awakened by the Holy Spirit that within you there burns a strong desire, insatiable as death, itself, so that you feel that you must find Christ? If so, I am happy to be addressing you—and you are already a happy person to have this hungering and thirsting after Christ, for that holy craving shall be fully satisfied with Him.

David thirsted to find this Ark *immediately* and so much in earnest was he that he said, "Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to me eyelids until I find out a place for the Lord." Oh, when it comes to this—that you must have Christ, then you shall have Christ! When with every breath you seem to say, "Give me Christ, or else I die," then you shall not die, but you shall have Christ and live! I have heard of some who have at last been driven to such a pitch of vehement determination that they have gone into their chamber and said, "By the Grace of God I will never leave this place until I have found my Lord." I knew one who said, "I dare not eat till I have found Christ, lest every morsel should choke me." And in the ardor of his spirit to roll himself upon his Savior and to be cleansed in His precious blood, he cast himself upon his knees and cried to his God—and the Lord revealed Himself to him! If you must have Christ, you shall have Him! But if you can be put off, you shall be put off.

Next, David sought the Ark *most reverently,* for he recognized it as being a token of the Presence of "the mighty God of Jacob." And you and I must seek Christ reverently. I do not like to hear the irreverent appeals of those who speak of Christ as though He were to be seized by force and carried off against all law and justice. Truly, "the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence," but it is the violence of humble men and women who dare to act with holy boldness because they are encouraged by their God. That I, a poor sinner, should ever speak with God in a sort of bullying tone, as I have heard some do, as though they said even to their God, "Stand and deliver," this will never do! Your mouth is in the best position when it is in the dust—and your heart is nearest to prevailing with God when it is bowed even to the ground. "Out of the depths have I cried to You, O Lord," should be the language with which we humbly approach His Throne of Grace.

But while David thus sought very reverently, yet observe that it was *with intense desire that he might receive this Ark when once he found it.* He wanted to find it, but his ultimate objective was to harbor it, to give

hospitality to it, to find a resting place for it. And oh, dear Heart, if you want to find Christ, let it be with this desire, "Oh, that He may come and live in my soul, and be my own personal Christ! I do not want merely to hear *about* Him, to be taught *about* Him—I want to *have* Him—and if He is to be had, I *will* have Him! If there is Grace beneath the sky for a poor sinner, then I, the chief of sinners, will not rest until I find rest in Him." If I am speaking to any here of that kind, I say again that I am thrice happy!

III. Proceeding still further with our subject and coming directly to our text—first, knowing what this Ark is, and then desiring to find it—thirdly, WE HAVE HEARD WHERE IT IS—"Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah."

"We heard of it." And is it not a blessed thing that *we have heard about where Christ is?* Where did you first hear of Him? I do not know whether, by Ephratah, David meant Bethlehem. Some think he did. That was the place where he was born and in his own father's house David had heard about the Ark. And there are some of us who can say with overflowing gratitude that we heard about Christ in our Ephratah, in our Bethlehem. His dear name was mingled with our mother's hush of lull-aby. Among the earliest recollections I have are memories of hymns about the Lord Jesus Christ! The Word of God was our first school book—do we not remember, as little children, spelling out in Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John, something about that dear Lord? "We heard of it at Ephratah," in our earliest home—if that is the meaning of David's words.

Oh, but, if you heard of Christ so soon, why have you not found Him yet? You who go to market know that there is nothing like the morning market—and there is nothing like seeking Christ early. They that seek Him early, *shall find Him.* If others do not, they shall—they shall find Him with an emphasis—find Him to a degree and in a measure in which some others do not. Oh, go to Christ in the morning market! Be the first there to buy the Truth of God and never sell it!

But Ephratah means—well, I do not know what it means, nor do any of the critics—it probably means some town of Ephraim. And I do not know and some of you do not know, perhaps, where you did *not* hear about Christ. You went to Sunday school and you heard of Him there. You went home and you heard of Him there. In these days, there are agencies that surround men so that they are often hearing of Him. Some here present have long heard of Christ and you are always hearing about Him—is it not time that you should get further than merely knowing and hearing—and should intensely seek until you *find* Him? You have heard of Christ from ministers. They have told you, many a time, where Christ is. You have heard of Him from Christian men and women. I hope that you will hear of Him again tonight from some Brother or Sister who will buttonhole you before you get out of this place, for there are some here who are very quick at that blessed work! And they will be sharp after you, for their love to you is great and they cannot bear that a soul should ever come within these walls and then, at last, be lost. I do pray the Lord that none ever may!

Oh, that your coming here might be the result of God's Grace working upon your soul, that you may be saved! I remember one friend coming to

me and he said to me very earnestly, "I should like, Sir, to take a seat in the Tabernacle." I answered, "Well, do so, by all manner of means! I am very glad when people do so." "But," he said, "I may not come up to what you expect of me, for I have heard that if I take a sitting here, you will expect me to be converted—and I cannot guarantee that." "No," I replied, "I do not want you to guarantee it. I do not mean the word, *expect,* in that sense at all, but I do hope that it will be so." "Oh," he exclaimed, "and so do I! I am going to take a sitting with that very view." And it was so, of course it was so! When the man wished it to be so, God accepted the wish and heard the prayer—and he was brought to Christ and joined the Church! May everyone who comes here have to say, "Well, wherever we did *not* hear about Christ, we *did* hear of Him at the Tabernacle—that was our Ephratah. We were told where He was and we received plain and clear directions as to how we might find Him."

IV. Now, fourthly, the next words are, "WE FOUND IT."

You remember the learned Grecian who, when he had made a discovery while in the bath, leaped out of it and ran down the streets crying, "Eureka! Eureka! I have found it! I have found it!" Oh, those are the best words in my text! "We found it."

Well, where did we find it? David said that he found it "in the fields of the woods," that is, *where he did not expect to find it.* Have not many of us found Christ where we never thought we should find Him? "Oh," says one, "I shall never go to Heaven, I am sure, through the preaching of Mr. So-and-So! I cannot stand him. I am sure I would never get a blessing among such-and-such people." And, perhaps, dear Friend, the very man that you have thought could not be a blessing to you is to be made a blessing to you—and the very place where you did not expect to find Christ will be the exact spot where you shall meet with Him!

In the case of David finding the Ark, it was not only where he could not have expected it, but it was *in a place that was despised*—a rustic place—"in the fields of the woods." Perhaps the Lord may lead you to some very plain minister, without any polish, or talent, or ability—a rustic speaker—a very Amos and, lo, there you will find the Ark of the Lord! If the Lord will guide you to Heaven through the word of a chimney-sweep, it would be far better than that you should go to Hell under the ministry of the most eloquent orator or the greatest bishop who ever lived. If you are brought to Jesus Christ by one who murders the Queen's English—it is a pity that he should do that but, still, it does not matter much, so long as he does not murder the Lord's Gospel, for the Gospel comes out straight and clear, despite his broken words. Then you will, as it were, find Christ "in the fields of the woods." I have known some who have found Christ in a very lowly place. They have gone away from all companions and up in their own little room they have sought and found Him. I knew one who found the Savior down a saw-pit and another who found Him in a hayloft. Some have walked the streets of London and have been more alone, there, than anywhere else and, as they have trudged along, men have seemed to them like trees walking—they have found Christ, figuratively, "in the fields of the woods." Get alone, dear Friends—it is horrible to live in a crowd! I do not know how a man's spiritual life is to be constantly maintained in a crowd—he must often be

alone. "You, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret."

"We found it in the fields of the woods," may, perhaps, mean, Brothers and Sisters, that you will find Christ *where you lose yourselves.* You know that it is very easy to lose yourself in the woods. You get in among the trees and you do not know whether you should turn to the right or to the left. Or you are in "the fields of the woods" and you are quite lost, for you cannot tell which way to go. The nearest thing to being saved is knowing that one is lost! When a man is really lost in his own consciousness, the next thing is for him to be saved. The end of yourself is the beginning of Christ. May the Lord cause you to know that you are thoroughly lost, and then soon you shall sing, "We found Christ in the woods where we lost ourselves."

It has struck me, too, in thinking over our text, that often we find Christ *very near to us.* Where did Adam go after he had disobeyed his Lord? He went and hid himself among the trees. And you and I found Christ where we were hiding—we did not know that He was among the trees of the woods—we thought that we were out of sight of God and far away from Heaven and Grace and mercy. Yet all the time, there was the mercy close at hand. Poor Sinner, you do not know how easy it is to be saved. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." You do not know how near that salvation is to you. "The Word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the Word of faith which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved."

V. Fifthly, and very briefly, "WE WILL GO." "We will go into His tabernacles."

Now that we have found where Christ is and we can go to Him, we *will have Him.* We will go to God in Christ—"we will go into His tabernacles." We will not delay a minute longer, but we will, even now, by faith, go to the great Father in His own appointed way. We will go to Him for all that He is prepared to give—"we will go into His tabernacles" to find the Mercy Seat, to bow before the Throne of Grace, to behold the Glory of God, to eat of the manna, to see the perfect Law of God and to come under the governance of the blessed rod that buds. "We will go into His tabernacles," first, into the outer court. Then, into the inner court and, last of all, into the Holy of Holies. It is a blessed thing to see a soul on the go towards God when Christ becomes the Way!

"We will go into His tabernacles" and *we will dwell there.* We will dwell with God. We will get back to the Father's House where there is "bread enough and to spare," and there we will stay. We will go to learn of God. We will be the disciples of Christ. We will go and we will go at once. Oh, I wish that I could hear some saying, "We will go. We know about Christ, we have found Him near us—we will now go and simply trust and rest—and so dwell in the great Father's love." God grant that you may do so!

VI. And then the last word is, WE WILL WORSHIP. "We will worship at His footstool."

In lowly reverence we will bow ourselves down in the very dust, for we are but dust and ashes even when we are saved. "We will worship at His

footstool." That is, *with deepest solemnity,* for even His Ark, His Temple, is but the footstool of the great King! Oh, what must He be! Heaven is His Throne, but the earth is His footstool. This world is a wonderful place. I have looked upon mountains, hills, valleys and mighty seas—yet the whole earth is nothing but the footstool of God! Let us go, then, and worship before Him in lowly reverence and with deepest solemnity.

But let us worship there *with great joy.* His "saints shall shout aloud for joy" and, as they bow at His footstool, it shall not be as slaves, but as His chosen and accepted ones. Let us also bow there *very gratefully,* blessing God that He has brought us to His feet. Part of the preparation for Heaven is to worship at God's footstool on earth, but, by-and-by, we shall worship in His palace above! "We will go and worship" because we have found Christ and He is ours! May this be true of all of you, dear Friends, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 132.

This Psalm is a prayer and pleading of the Covenant, such a prayer as might have been offered by Solomon at the opening of the Temple, or by any of the descendants of David, either in their times of joy or in their seasons of affliction. It divides itself into three parts. In the first seven verses, mention is made of David's zeal for the Ark and for the House of the Lord. Then, in three more verses, there follows the prayer at the moving of the Ark. And then the last verses mention the Covenant which God made with His servant, David, which is pleaded by David's descendants in later years. The Psalm begins thus—

Verse 1. *LORD, (or Jehovah), remember David, and all his afflictions.* We cannot come before God in our own name; so what a mercy it is that we have a good name to plead! You and I do not approach the Lord in the name of any saint or holy man—we plead the name of "great David's greater Son" and with the utmost emphasis can we say, "Lord, remember Jesus, and all His afflictions—His griefs and sorrows on our behalf." This was a most proper prayer, however, as it stands, from those who belonged to David's race—they pleaded the name of him with whom God had entered into Covenant on the behalf of all his seed—"Lord, remember David, and all his trouble—his trouble which he took about Your house, and about Your Ark."

2. *How he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob.* Jacob was the great maker of vows and you will also remember that Jacob, on his dying bed, made mention of "the mighty God of Jacob." David, in this Psalm, imitated his forefathers—he made a solemn vow to the Lord that he would build a house for God, even as Jacob did when he said, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and clothes to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God. And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house."

3-5. *Surely 1 will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids until I find a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.* He

used strong words to signify that his house would be no house to him and that he would not regard his bed as a place of rest until he had discovered where God would dwell. It means that he would give himself wholly up to this project—it would be his life-work to find a suitable place for the worship of the Most High. I wish that this same zeal would take firm hold of all Christians. How many there are who dwell in their ceiled houses while the House of God lies in waste! They can provide abundantly for themselves, but for God's cause, for God's Gospel, for a place wherein the poor may meet for the preaching of the Word, they do not seem to care. May the Lord give us to feel something of this self-denial and devotion to God that moved the heart of David!

6, 7. *Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the woods. We will go into His tabernacles: we will worship at His footstool.* This is what David did and you see what trouble he took in the matter. But you know that he was not permitted to build a house for God. Yet he had the same reward as if he had done so, for God built up *his* house and established his dynasty for many generations! God often takes the will for the deed with His servants. And when they wish to do a good work and there is some reason why they may not carry out their plans, the Lord looks upon them and gives them the same reward as if they had accomplished their design. After all, dear Friends, David wised to build a house for God and although it was very right and proper in itself, yet, in the sight of God, it was but a small matter! He took little account of Solomon's Temple, though it was "exceedingly magnificent!" You remember how Stephen said, just as a sort of passing remark of no great importance, "Solomon built Him an house. Howbeit, the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands." And it is a very curious fact in history that from the very day in which the great Temple was dedicated, spiritual religion began to decline in the land! God's worship was never more pure than when it was rendered in a tent in a humble way. But, as soon as the great gilded Temple was erected and priestly pomp began to display itself, it seemed as if men began to depart from the spiritual worship of Jehovah. How often it is that the more gorgeous the Ceremonial Law, the less hearty and the less spiritual the worship becomes! Our great and glorious God who fills Heaven and earth takes small account of noble architecture and earthly pomp and splendor, or of the sweetness of music, or the fumes of incense. He is far above all that is merely sensuous! He delights to dwell where there are broken hearts that He can bind and where genuine Believers worship Him in spirit and in truth.

8-10. *Arise, O LORD, into Your rest; You, and the Ark of Your strength. Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness; and let Your saints shout for joy. For Your servant David's sake turn not away the face of Your anointed.* Turn back for a minute to the 8th verse. "Arise, O Jehovah, into Your rest." This exclamation was very similar to the language which Moses used whenever the Ark set forward—"Rise up, Jehovah, and let Your enemies be scattered; and let them that hate You flee before You." And when it rested, he said, "Return, O Jehovah, unto the many thousands of Israel." So David did well to use similar words when the Ark was, at lat, brought to its resting place. He calls it the Ark of God's Strength, for such it really was. It had done great wonders. It was when

the Ark was borne by the priests into the midst of Jordan that the river was divided so that the people could pass over with dry feet. Even when the Ark was taken captive, it brought disaster to the Philistines. And when the men of Beth-Shemesh irreverently looked into it, great numbers of them were slain! It was truly the Ark of God's Strength—the great type of the power of God in Christ Jesus our Lord! In the 9th verse we read, "Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness." That is the best robe that he can wear who serves God! And you know that all of us who believe in Jesus have been made kings and priests unto God. Righteousness, therefore, should be the garment which we wear from head to foot. "And let Your saints shout for joy." God's holy ones should be happy ones! No man has so much right to be happy as he that is holy. We serve the happy God—we may well be happy ourselves—and we are not to keep our happiness hidden within our own hearts. "Let Your saints shout for joy." Let them exult, let them triumph, let them express their delight. The 10th verse is a prayer for the king and for the whole line of kings—the Psalmist pleads with the Lord to continue to look upon them for the sake of David with whom He had made His Covenant. Now the Psalm finishes with the Covenant made with David.

11. *The LORD has sworn in truth unto David; He will not turn from it, I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body.* That was literally fulfilled in a long line of kings, but it is more gloriously fulfilled in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. David the prophet-king is dead, but he, seeing before that God would raise up Christ, laid hold upon this precious promise, "*I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body.*" Our Lord Jesus Christ is the King of the Jews, but He is also King of kings and Lord of lords and, as God has set Him on the Throne, neither devils nor men can ever pull Him from it.

12. *If Your children will keep My Covenant and My Testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon your throne forevermore.* And so it would have been. The kingdom of Israel would never have been broken up, either by internal rebellion or external attack, if it had not been that the kings flagrantly turned aside from God. He bore with them very long, but they waxed worse and worse and, at last, God's Covenant had to be kept, through their default, by a deed of vengeance against them. Yet today, in spirit, this Covenant stands fast, for the Lord Jesus has kept it on His people's behalf and now He shall sit upon the throne of David forevermore, blessed be His holy name!

13. *For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation.* Here are some of the sweetest words that were ever written! There are fathomless depths of sweetness in them, for here we have the Truth of God concerning the election of the Church of God. "The Lord has chosen Zion." Some men cannot endure to hear the Doctrine of Election—I suppose they like to choose their own wives, but they are not willing that Christ should select His bride, the Church! Everybody is to have a free will except God! But let them know that God still exercises a Sovereign choice among the sons of men. Jesus said to His disciples, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." Blessed be His name, the Truth still stands! "The Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation." We delight to dwell with those whom we love and God so loves His

Church that He desires to always dwell in it—and He does dwell in it by His Spirit—and a day shall come when the perfected Church, the new Jerusalem, shall come down out of Heaven from God, having the Glory of the Lord, and the Lamb shall be the Light thereof. You know how the last chapters of the Book of Revelation describe the glorified Church and God dwelling in the midst of it. "The Lord has chosen Zion." That is the first thing—election. "He has desired it for His habitation. That is the next thing—the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the Church. And this is one of the greatest marvels of which we have ever heard!

14. *This is My resting place forever.* Is it not amazing that God, Jehovah, should say of His people, "This is My resting place forever"? Now, if He rests, I am sure that we may! It is very remarkable that when God was making the world, He never rested till He had fitted it up for His child, and everything was ready for Adam. God never stopped His work till there was everything that Adam could desire. And when it was all complete, then He rested the seventh day. So, when He has done everything for His Church, when His work for her is all completed, then Christ rests, but not till then! He says, by the mouth of Isaiah, "For Zion's sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns." But that being once accomplished, He says, "This is My rest forever." God does not rest in the work of His hands as a Creator, He rests in the work of Christ as the Redeemer!

14. *Here will I dwell; for I have desired it.* God dwells in His Church and will dwell in it. He has desired to do so and His desire will certainly be realized—who can cause Him to be disappointed?

15. *I will abundantly bless her provisions.* By which I understand that there will be provisions, that there will be abundant provisions and that there will be abundant blessings on those provisions. God grant that we may always find it so! Let us plead this precious, "I will." "I will abundantly bless her provisions."

15. *I will satisfy her poor with bread.* Poor, and yet satisfied—satisfied with bread! Yes, but what kind of bread? The Bread that came down from Heaven, the Bread of God, which is Christ Jesus, whose flesh is meat, indeed, and whose blood is drink, indeed. "I will satisfy her poor with bread." The Lord does not say anything about her rich. No, but we read in another place, "The rich He has sent away empty." I wish to always remain among the poor of the Lord's flock—not to put my name down among those perfect people who are so rich in Grace that they are obliged to tell everybody about it! No, I would be poor in spirit—emptied more and more, lying lowly and humbly at my Lord's feet. I am the more ready to do this because I perceive that the Lord has prepared all His goodness for the poor in spirit. "I will satisfy her poor with bread."

16. *I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.* The prayer in the 8th verse was, "Arise, O Lord, into Your rest." In the 14th verse, we read the answer, "This is My rest forever: here will I dwell." Then in the 9th verse was the petition, "Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness." Now the Lord gives the response, "I will also clothe her priests with salvation." Righteousness is only a part of salvation, but oh, what glorious raiment it is when a man once wears the

silken dress of salvation! Talk of "cloth of gold"—there is nothing among royal array that can be compared to the vestments of the saints! I go in for vestments when they are those of which the Lord says, "I will also clothe her priests with salvation." They shall be covered over with it, from head to foot, so that there shall be nothing of His people to be seen but His own salvation! Notice the prayer in the 9th verse, "Let Your saints shout for joy." And the answer is here, "Her saints shall shout aloud for joy." God always gives more than we ask! Silver prayers get golden answers! "Open your mouth wide," He says, "and I will fill it." Yes, and then open it again and He will fill it yet again, for He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

17. *There will I make the horn of David to bud.* As a stag's horn grows, putting out fresh buds and branches, so shall the power of David be increased and enlarged. We see that promise fulfilled spiritually in the growing Kingdom of Christ.

17. *I have ordained a lamp for My Anointed.* His name shall never go out like an extinguished lamp. If it is blown out, once, as it were, in the death of Solomon or any other, king, yet from that lamp shall another be lighted. The Lord says, I have ordained a lamp," and Christ will always be a source of brightness in the world! He will always be "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel." As the holy lamp in the sanctuary was never to go out, so has God ordained that Christ shall always shine to the joy and delight of His people.

18. *His enemies will I clothe with shame.* In this Psalm two sets of clothing are mentioned and you can have which you like. Here is one, "I will clothe her priests with salvation." And here is the other, "His enemies will I clothe with shame." Shame is a terrible thing! Many a man has thrown away his life to try to escape from the shame of a guilty conscience. But the ungodly will be forever clothed with shame and they will be eternally condemned. "His enemies," that is the description of the ungodly. It is of small account what your outward character appears to be—if you are an enemy of Christ, these are the garments in which you will die—and these are the garments in which you will continue to suffer forever. "His enemies will I clothe with shame."

18. *But upon Himself shall His crown flourish.* Upon Christ the laurel wreath, or rather, the Crown of Glory, shall never wither. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He has set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—617, 130.

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PRIDE THE DESTROYER
NO. 2591

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 27, 1883.

"Behold the proud, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith."
Habakkuk 2:4.

HABAKKUK had to prophesy to the people that God would eventually deliver them out of the hand of the Chaldeans and send them better times. But he warned them that although the vision would come and, as far as God was concerned, it would not really tarry, yet they would grow impatient under their suffering and they would say that the vision *did* tarry. And so, indeed, it would seem to do while they were suffering—and the Prophet here hints at the reason why God's merciful deliverances may sometimes be delayed. The Lord is willing to give mercy directly, for He delights not in judgment. If it were according to wisdom, we would have nothing from God's hand but that which is pleasant and sweet, for He would not cause any one of His creatures a needless pain—and He is full of gentleness and tenderness and mercy.

The reason why the vision tarried in Habakkuk's day, and the mercy was slow in coming, was that the trials of the people might act as a test of their character. In order to separate the precious from the vile, God used the winnowing fan of affliction, that the chaff might be blown away and the pure wheat remain. Often, in national trials, the furnace is heated exceedingly hot and the fire is blown upon with a fierce blast in order that the gold may be divided from the dross. It is always God's purpose to put a division between Israel and Egypt, between him that fears the Lord and him that fears Him not. You and I cannot make that division. In this world it is very dangerous work to try to pull up the tares, for we are very apt to pull up the wheat, also. When, at last, we shall haul our big net to shore, then may we begin to separate the contents and put the good into vessels and cast the bad away.

But now, if we were to try to sort the contents of the drag net, we would probably throw away as many of the good as of the bad, and save as many of the bad as of the good! We cannot do the separating work, but God is constantly doing it and often, in times of trouble, trial becomes a very searching test of men. Those who looked like true Believers while all was smooth and bright, have given up their confidence in God when trial has been fierce and long-protracted. This is the patience of the

saints, but, alas, this is often the *impatience* of mere professors—and God thus makes men see what they really are! They perceive what is in their hearts when they are exposed to long-continued and severe affliction. See, then, one reason why troubles come upon both the righteous and the wicked—that men's true character may be discovered and that the secrets of their hearts may be revealed.

It happened in this case, and it happens in a great many other instances, that the fierce heat of the furnace of trouble separates men into two classes. One class is composed of men who are high and lifted up in heart. Our text says, "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him." Then there is another class, namely, the just. And of these the text says, "The just shall live by his faith." My dear Friends, when trial comes on us—as it surely will—may you and I be able to bear it! May we prove to be men and women who can endure it and if it is so, we shall live by faith! That will be our distinguishing mark. But if any of us are proud and have lofty ideas concerning ourselves, "the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of Hosts." Let us bear this great Truth of God in mind as we come to the direct consideration of our text.

I. I shall speak first upon these words of the Lord to Habakkuk as REVEALING A GREAT SIN. "His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him." The great sin is the sin of pride, the lifting up of the soul in rebellion against the Lord.

This sin of pride is often forgotten and many persons do not even think it is a sin at all. Here is a man who says that he is absolutely perfect. Does he know what the sin of pride really is? What prouder being can there be than one who talks like that? "Oh, but," he says, "I am humble." Is there any soul living that is so proud as he is who says he is humble? Is not that the acme and climax of pride? Another says, "I hate flattery." Did not one say to Julius Caesar that he hated flatterers, "being then," as the world's poet says, "most flattered"? Yes, assuredly, that soft silken voice that says, "You never give way to pride, you are of a lowly spirit, you are never lifted up. In fact, you hardly appreciate yourself highly enough and nobody else does because you are so humble!" Why, that is the worst kind of pride! It has only put on the sheepskin instead of coming out in its true wolfish garb!

Pride, to begin with, I am afraid, may be set down as *the sin of human nature.* If there is a sin that is universal, it is this. Where is it *not* to be found? Hunt among the highest and loftiest in the world and you wall find it there. And then go and search among the poorest and the most miserable and you wall find it there. There may be as much pride inside a beggar's rags as in a prince's robes and a harlot may be as proud as a model of chastity. Pride is a strange creature—it never objects to its lodgings. It will live comfortably enough in a palace and it will live equally at its ease in a hovel. Is there any man in whose heart pride does not lurk?

If anyone held up his hand and said, "I am one," I would answer, "That is Number One in the widest street of the whole city of Self-Conceit," for, when we fancy that we have clean escaped from pride, it is only because we have lost the sense of its weight through being surrounded with it! A man who bears a bowl of water feels its weight but if he goes right into the water, it will be all over him, and yet he will not notice the burden of it. He who lives in pride up to the neck—no, he who is over head and heels in pride is the most likely to imagine that he is not proud at all!

Pride takes all manner of shapes. You and I, I daresay, have very different forms of pride. Perhaps my pride does not hold any relationship to your pride and your pride, of course, is a very right sort of pride. "It is what I call a proper pride," says one. Yes, that is your sort of pride. Mine, I admit, is a very *improper* one. I frankly make that confession, I cannot and dare not think that it has any propriety about it at all—it is a miserable, wretched affair! So is yours, I think, and you would agree with me if you could but see it as it really is. But pride takes all manner of shapes. Have you ever seen it in the man of property? He is a very important individual. It may be that his property is not very large but, still, considering the village in which he lives, he is quite a big man—and on the vestry—why, he is as big as an emperor! You and I do not, perhaps, think much of him, but that does not matter to him, for in his own estimation he is a very great man. Then there is a London merchant. If he has succeeded in life, what a great man he is—how proud, how exclusive! How he looks down upon his fellow men! How could you, being of an inferior grade, venture into his pew and sit side by side with him? He carries his pride even into the House of God! We have seen it there and mourned over it, but it is easy enough for a man to become proud of his possessions.

Another man, with no possessions, is proud of his bodily strength. He is very strong. Let anybody wrestle with him and he shall see what a Samson he is! And, oh, how vain-glorious he grows, and how proud—proud of his strength of muscle and sinew and bone! Another man is proud of his talent. If he has not acquired any wealth by it, yet he ought to have done so. If the world has not yet recognized him as a genius, he has recognized himself most distinctly! He is a very first-class man in his own line of things. Listen to him as he boasts of what he has learned! We have known others boast of their character. When we have explained what "a sinner" means, they have been kind enough to say, in a complimentary sort of way, "Yes, we are all sinners." But they did not mean that they had really sinned at all. No, not they! They had a fine, splendid, unworn righteousness that was "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." You know the good people I mean, always able to glory that they have kept the Law of God from their youth up, and have done what they ought to have done—that is a form that pride very frequently takes.

Even in people who know the Lord, see what relics of pride there will often be! Remember what Mr. Bunyan said on one occasion—after he

had done preaching, a Brother came to him and said, "You have preached an admirable sermon." "Ah," said Bunyan, "you are too late! The devil told me that before I got down the pulpit stairs." A good Brother prayed at the Prayer Meeting very sweetly, very devoutly. And when he had finished, there came a soft whisper in his ear, "You have quite recovered that Prayer Meeting from its dullness—what a wonderful man you are!" And when we have not ventured to do anything of the sort in public, if we get five minutes' communion with God in secret prayer, then up comes Satan, again, and says, "Oh, you are growing in Grace! You are a wonderful Christian." If you cannot realize your Lord's Presence and you are humbled and bowed to the dust because you have not that enjoyment of God which you used to have, then Satan comes, and says, "How tender of conscience you are! How jealous of yourself! How watchful you have been!" And up go your topsails and all your flags of pride are flying in the breeze as you think what a fine saint you are! So, you see, it is as I said, pride takes many shapes.

Now, in all cases, *pride is most unreasonable.* There is never in a poor sinner any reason why he should be proud. Suppose a man is wealthy? Well, who gave that wealth to him? And having it, now, how much of it can he carry away with him? And is wealth always a testimonial to the character of its possessor? Is it not sometimes given to the very basest of mankind? And though it is, in some cases, the reward of honesty, of industry and of perseverance and self-denial, yet even then it does not always bring comfort to a man's heart—and we can ask him, "What have you that you have not received?" Of all forms of pride, this pride of wealth is one of the most wicked! Suppose a man boasts of his talent? For what has he to pride himself in that? Did he make his own talent? Suppose that his skull happens to be a little bigger than his neighbor's and that there are certain organs there more fully developed than in others—did he create his own brain? Did he give himself his own capacities? There is a great deal in our descent and in our birth gifts, but, being gifts, these are not things for us to pride ourselves upon—for them we must give all the glory to God, for certainly they come from Him! And what if a man has a spotless character? Yet he who is most honest to himself knows that there are, even within him, secret things opposed to his God—and things to be repented of.

And what if we have Grace? O my Brothers and Sisters, the worst thing in the world would be to be proud of our Grace, or of our Graces, because these come to us as a bare act of charity! Shall the beggar be proud because he is a bigger beggar than others? Will a man who is very deeply in debt say, "I have reason to be more proud than you because I owe ten times as much as you do"? Yet that is just the condition of every man who has any Divine Grace—he owes it all to God—and he who has the most Grace is the most in debt to his Lord! I think that the more God's glories strike our eyes, the humbler we shall be. And the more Grace we receive, the more we shall be like Peter when his boat was full

of fish and it began to sink—and he cried, under a sense of his own unworthiness—"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Yes, as we get weighed down with mercy, we shall begin to sink in our own esteem! There can never be any reasonableness in our dreaming that there is in us any cause for pride.

And to close this part of my discourse, let me remind you that *wherever pride is found, it is always hateful to God.* Why, pride is even hateful to men! Men cannot bear a proud man and, therefore, a proud man who has any sense left often sees that it is so, and he tries to affect manners of modesty. He will seem to be humble when he really is not, if he has the suspicion that all about him will dislike him if they know him to be proud. But God cannot stand pride—it is a part of His daily business to put down the proud. When He lifts up His hands, it is either to bless the humble or else to abase the proud. "He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty." He intends that the pride of all human glory shall be stopped, so He lifts His great battle-ax and crashes through the shield of the mighty. He fits His arrow to the bow and finds out the joints of the harness of the proud—and they fall before Him. God cannot endure them, for pride is a stab at Deity—it is an attack upon the undivided Glory of God. "My Glory will I not give to another." He would as soon give it to graven images as to men! And He will not let either false gods or proud men have it! It is to Himself, and to Himself, alone, that all praise and honor and glory must come.

Thus much, then, about the great sin revealed in our text. Let us pause a moment or two for silent prayer before we pass on to the next part of our subject.

II. Now let us think how THIS GREAT SIN BETRAYS A SAD EVIL—"Behold the proud, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him."

If he is a proud man, he is not an upright man. If he thinks highly of himself, there is something out of the perpendicular. If a man says, "I do not need to make confession of sin, I do not need to come to Christ as a guilty sinner," then, Friend, I must tell you that *you do not know the truth.* If you knew certain things, truthfully, you would change your tune. For instance, a man who says, "I have kept the Law," does not know what the Law means. Perhaps he supposes that those ten great Commandments only refuse him certain outward things—but he does not know that they are all spiritual—that, for instance, if the Commandment says, "You shall not commit adultery," it is not merely the *act* of adultery that is forbidden, but every sin of the kind. Every tendency to lewdness—every unchaste word or thought—for so Christ explains it, "I say unto you, that whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." This makes the Law of God look very different from the mere casual reading of it that many give.

If it says, "You shall not covet," any thought of a desire to gain that which is my neighbor's, by unlawful means, in discontent with God's Providence comes under that Law. So is it with all the Commandments—they are spiritual, they are far-reaching and when a man understands their true character, he cries—"O my God, I have, indeed, broken Your holy Law! How could I have kept it? From the first moment when I sinned, my fallen nature has incapacitated me from ever keeping this thrice-holy Law of Yours."

If a man really knows the true character of the Law of God, it may be that he does not know the truth about himself—does not know that he is foolish—does not know that the very springs of his nature are corrupt—does not know that out of the polluted fountain of his unregenerate heart there can only come corrupt streams. When he really begins to know himself as he is in the sight of God, then he cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But not till then. Hence, our text says, "His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him." That is, it is not according to the Truth of God—he does not know the Truth, he does not judge according to the Truth—he judges according to a false standard.

This expression may also mean that *he does not seek the Light of God.* You can often notice that if a man has a high opinion of himself, he is extremely good and excellent and does not need to be saved by Grace. He does not want to be told too much about himself. He likes to go to a place of worship where they prophesy very smooth things and if he ever strays in where there is very plain talk, he says that the preacher is too personal. The Hindu thinks it is wicked to kill an insect, or to take life of any kind—and that he will surely not enter into his happy paradise if he does. When the missionary showed a Hindu, by means of a microscope, how many living creatures there were in a single drop of the water which was in a glass on the table, in order to convince him of the impossibility of avoiding the destruction of life if he drank the water, what did the Hindu do? Why, he smashed up the microscope! That was his way of answering it! And so, sometimes, if the Truth of God is put very plainly so that men cannot escape from the force of it, not wishing to know the uncomfortable Truth, they turn upon their heels and find fault with the preacher and refuse to hear any more from him!

Now, he that does not want to knew all the Truth of God is not upright, for, as our Lord said to Nicodemus, "Everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." But he that is upright in heart courts the light! He invites the inspection, even, of God Himself, for he dreads above all things the possibility of being self-deceived. O dear Friends, this pride, if we have it, betrays its dire evil by a lack of uprightness in not desiring the Light of God!

And, yet further, there is another form of this lack of uprightness. A man whose soul is lifted up with pride has *his whole religion warped so that there is nothing upright about him.* Have you ever heard him pray? "God, I thank you that I am not as other men are." This is the sum and

substance of his prayer, for pride has warped it. If he praises God, it is not as a sinner saved by Grace—he sings something about what he has done and what he has become—and always the first point in his conversation is, "See what I am! See what I am!" Pride warps him everywhere, so that he cannot do a single action that is not affected by it. If he gives alms to the poor, he has his penny in one hand, but his other hand is holding to his mouth a trumpet so that he may blow it at the corner of the street so that everybody may know how generous he is! He spoils all that he does because his soul is lifted up with pride—which warps his whole life.

I believe, dear Friends, that *a heart of this kind will never stand the test of the coming days.* Have you ever noticed that when Paul quotes this verse in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he makes a very significant addition to it? He says, "The just shall live by faith: but if any man draws back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him." That is a kind of hint to us that when the heart of a man is lifted up with pride, in due time he will draw back. I will tell you, dear Friends, what I have seen many times. I have seen men, members of Christian Churches, undoubtedly very earnest, very generous, indeed, all that you could wish them to be. They have prospered in worldly affairs, but where are they now? One of the severest tests that can be applied to any man is to let him be made wealthy! Well might our Savior say, as the rich young man turned away from Him, "How with much difficulty shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God." The true children of God can bear even this test, but there are many professors who cannot. Wealth is a refining pot that tests the sincerity of their profession. This is how it acts. The man has grown too respectable to worship where he used to meet with a few poor godly people—he must go to some place where there is a higher class of society. It is true that there is no Gospel preaching where he goes and that there is all the hypocrisy of semi-Romanism, but the *elite of* the neighborhood go there and so must he! If he happens to meet any of his old friends with whom he seemed to be so glad to have communion in years past, he scarcely recognizes them! He does not know them in the Lord. He has gone clean away from them. Is not that often the case? And why is it so? Because the gentleman always was a person of importance and now, having grown wealthy, he is still more important! So he goes away from those who would be his best friends. That is because his soul is not upright in him.

I have also seen just the opposite of this man. I have seen persons grow very poor after being in circumstances of comparative comfort. Before they were poor, they seemed to be very earnest Christians, but, after a while, when poverty had overtaken them, they did not like to come among their old friends because their clothes were not quite as new and their house was not on quite as good a street—and they were going down in the world. Instead of clinging to Christ all the more. Instead of following after the Lord and making sure of a heavenly inheritance when the

world was slipping away from them, they have turned back and have renounced whatever semblance of faith they ever possessed. And the reason is because their soul was lifted up with pride and was not upright. They never were truly brought low and humbled before God and so, when the testing time came, away they went! Now, dear Friends, such a test as this will be applied to all of you. You will either go up or go down. Or else, if you remain in the same station of life, the test in your case will be time. You will grow weary in the ways of God. You will want some fresh thing unless the Lord has truly humbled you and brought you to live by faith in Him. But if the Lord has worked effectually in you, by His Grace, then He may make you as rich as He likes, or as poor as He likes, or let you live as long as Methuselah if He likes, but you will stand fast to your profession because the root of the matter is in you. God grant that it may be so!

III. Thirdly, and very briefly, PRIDE OF HEART DISCOVERS IN MEN A SERIOUS OPPOSITION. Let me read the whole of our text. "Behold the proud, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but—*but* the just shall live by his faith." And the *but,* here, seems to imply that as long as a man's soul is lifted up with pride, he will never truly know anything about faith and never come to live by faith.

For, first, the gentleman is *too great to live by faith.* He will not even give himself time to consider what faith means! He is so busy in the City. He has to look after such a number of things. He is so important a person that he cannot trouble his head about faith. Teach a Sunday school child, teach a servant girl, teach an old woman, teach a laborer if you please, but as for himself—well, to tell the whole truth, he does not care about religion. He says that he cannot bring his mind down to such a thing as that! His notion is that he is altogether too great a man to give himself to the consideration of this matter. Now, these are the people that destroy their own souls because they will not be candid enough to enquire and learn what the way of salvation is—

"Were I so tall to reach the pole,
And grasp the ocean with a span,"

I would wish to know what God has to say to me. And if I could grow as holy as the archangel, I would still delight to sit at Jesus' feet and hear what He has to reveal to me. But there are some who are too big for that kind of thing—they will never believe in Christ, for they are too great, even, to consider what faith is!

And, next, there are some who are *too wise to ever believe.* They read certain "high-class modern literature" and their minds have grown very expansive. They know how to sort out that which is philosophical and that which is not. They can judge their Creator—they are more infallible than the Holy Spirit—they sit in trial upon Prophets and Apostles—and upon the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself! They pick and choose what they will believe and what they will reject. Such people do not believe to the saving of the soul—of course they do not—for it is essential to faith that

you become as a little child. And until you do so, you cannot have true faith in Christ.

There are some who are not so much burdened with worldly wisdom, but *they fancy that they are too good to be saved.* I know that the notion with some people is that salvation is only for very wicked people—for those who have been to prison, those who have egregiously sinned against the rules of society. Do you not know, my dear Hearer, that there is the same way of salvation for you who have been amiable and excellent and moral, as there is for the drunk and the thief? Do you not know that there is only one gate to Heaven for the murderer, if he is saved, and for you who have kept the Commandments from your youth up? "You must be born again," is a necessity for the children of saints as well as for the children of sinners! "You must be washed in the precious blood," is as true for the very best of fallen humanity as for the very worst! By these stern Truths of God, the axe is laid to the very root of the tree of self-righteousness! Oh, that men did but think of this! But they are so good—so very good—that they cannot imagine that they are to be saved like the very chief of sinners! And so they reject the only way of salvation.

And I have known some, too, who are *now too "advanced" to continue to live by faith.* They do not want to come to Christ just as they did *at first*—they are so now "advanced" that they stand on a different footing from what they did. Well, I can only say to such that I believe that this is nothing but pride of heart. As for myself, I will, by God's Grace, never go one inch beyond the position of Jack the Huckster—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All."

This is the only ground upon which I dare set my feet! They always begin to slip and slide beneath me when I get beyond that. Christ for me, first and last, Alpha and Omega, the Beginner and Finisher of faith! I believe that every other ground of standing is a quicksand that will swallow a man up. "The just shall live by his faith" and if any are getting so proud that they are living by their *feelings*, or living on their old *experiences*, I think that we may stand in doubt of them and they have reason to stand in doubt of themselves! There was one who used to say that he was not half so much afraid of his sins as he was of what he conceived to be his good works, for his sins had humbled him full often, but what he thought were his good works had puffed him up and done him much more mischief. I am more afraid of a lofty pride of self than of anything else under Heaven. He that is down need fear no fall, but he that rises very high in his own esteem is not far from destruction! "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

IV. I close my discourse with this last point. Our text, after having spoken against pride, DIRECTS US TO A VERY PLEASING CONTRAST—"The just shall live by his faith."

There is a man with an upright heart, an honest tongue, a careful hand, an obedient walk. *He is a really just man.* Are there such? There

are none that are perfectly just, but there are many who may be called just in the Scriptural sense of the term. They walk before God and are perfect, even as was said of Job, "That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." Blessed be God, there are tens of thousands of His people that are just men and women whom He has taught to serve Him to do as they would be done by, seeking to do to others as they would have others do to them! There are plenty of such. It is a beautiful sight to see a really just man. May we live in such company! May we die in such company!

Now, whenever you come to talk with these just men, you will find that *they are truly humble.* They do not live upon their works. The more holy a man is, generally the more he depreciates himself. You do not hear a just man saying, "I am living before God by my alms, by my prayers, by my repentance, by my fasting, by my Church attendance, by my Chapel attendance." You never hear anything of the sort—a just man disclaims his own righteousness, thinks nothing of it—and wraps himself up in the righteousness of Christ, and says that he is "accepted in the Beloved."

Our text says that this man "shall live by his faith." That is to say, when trial comes and the proud man dies, *the just man lives on.* Where is the man who had such a lofty idea of himself? Ah, where is he? He is gone, but this man of faith lives on. You know the story of the two martyrs. They had both witnessed a good confession and, at last, they were laid by the heels in prison to wait for a few days and then to be burnt. One of them said to his fellow, "I am so afraid lest, when I come to the stake, the sharp pain should make a coward of me and I should turn away, and deny my Savior." "Oh," replied the other, "I have no fears about that! My faith in God is so firm that I am sure He will help me through. I am confident in what I have believed. I shall die like a man. I am not at all afraid of the fire." "Ah," said the first, "I lie awake at night, for fire is a dreadful thing, and I wonder how I shall act when I begin to burn. I do love the Lord, I know. And I do trust Him. But if I turn aside, it will be an awful thing! I am so afraid, for my flesh is very weak." The other answered, "I cannot bear to hear you talk like that. Here I am, full of confidence and full of faith. I never have any such feelings as you have. You are very imperfect—I have gone far beyond you."

When they came to the stake, our poor tempted friend burned splendidly, blessing and praising and magnifying the Lord! And the great, self-confident boaster recanted—and saved his wretched life! His soul, which was lifted up, was not upright in him. But the just man lived, in the very best sense, by his faith, and triumphed even amidst the flames! I shall not be amazed if many who have their topsails up, are blown out of the water and into the water—and wrecked when the great winds of temptation are out—while many who are creeping along, afraid of the tempest, with nothing but bare poles, will outlive the storm!

It is not the man who is great in his own sight that is great in the sight of God. It is he that is broken and contrite, little and weak and trembling,

and yet who believes in Jesus and casts himself upon the great love of God in Christ who shall live. Yes, and he shall so live that when he comes to die, *he shall die full of life and he shall enter into eternal life.* I know that I am addressing some who say that they are afraid to die and they think that they cannot be God's people because of that fear. Do not distress yourself in that way, my dear Friends! Perhaps you are not called to die just yet and you have, therefore, not yet had Dying Grace given to you—but you will have it when the time comes! A dear Friend of mine had been for many years in great bondage because he thought that he was afraid to die. God brought him out of that bondage in rather a singular manner. He happened to be in a London printing office, one day, and, next door, a wholesale chemist's took fire. There were a great many explosions and the place was burning furiously. He was upstairs and others began running down to make their escape.

My old friend was as cool as possible—he walked downstairs, he was in no hurry and, though there was great danger and everybody thought that the whole place and all that were in it would be burnt, he was quite calm. He said that when he reached the street, he stood and looked at the fire and said to himself, "Now, when I seem to be in danger of death, I am perfectly calm and happy. So, when I really come to die, that is how I shall be—I am sure that I shall, for I have tested and proved it." And you timid, nervous people, have you not found out for yourselves that if ever you get into an accident, you are often the bravest people there? You feeble trembling ones seem strengthened up at the moment and so shall it be when you come to die if you are Believers in Jesus Christ! He that loved you will not leave you in your last minutes! Would you leave your wife, would you leave your child, would you leave your husband, if you saw any of these dear ones in the agonies of death? No, if you were a thousand miles away, you would come home to them to wipe the death sweat from their brows and moisten their parched lips! And do you think that our blessed God will be absent when we come to die? No. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." He will be there and Jesus will be there and the Holy Spirit will be there—and so we who believe in Jesus shall die in peace.

Remember how rapidly our lives are passing away. One after another, from this congregation, goes into eternity every week. Do not go into eternity without Christ, I beseech you! "When shall I go?" you ask. Ah, that I cannot tell. You know how, all through the year, our friends keep on going. There is not a week passes without it being said to me, "So-and-So is gone." I ask, "Did I know him? Whereabouts did he sit?" I look at the spot and I remember—"Yes, it was that gray-headed old man in that seat over yonder." Or, "that young man with a wife and three or four children." Yes, they are gone and if they were not saved, they are gone where hope can never reach them, where they are past all invitation, where they must forever wring their hands in anguish because they would not have Heaven and Christ on Free-Grace terms.

"Well, dear Sir, we are going to think about these things." Are you? Will you tell me *when* you are going to think about them? I would rather that you stated a time, even if it were a year to come. It would be a dangerous thing to put it off so long, would it not? But, oh, if you keep your promise, I would rather that you said, "a year to come," than that you should keep on, year after year, postponing your decision! Remember that you who are unsaved need three things. First, you need the pardon of sin—and it is scarcely necessary for me to repeat in your ears that you can only get it by coming to Christ. You desire also to be heard in prayer, your very heart sighs after that favor and you know there is but one Throne of Grace and only one Being who can present your petitions so that they shall be granted. And you also long to have a sight of God, a comforting sight of Him as your reconciled Father—and you know that you can never have that except through Jesus Christ.

These three things are to be found in Christ and they are not to be found anywhere else. If there is anyone here who wants Christ, I am so glad if he knows who Christ is and what are the treasures that are stored up in Him. It is a great thing to have this knowledge but, oh, it will be a terrible thing, bringing far greater responsibilities and involving sevenfold guilt, if you know *where* these things are and *what* they are—and yet do not seek to possess them yourselves. I leave with you the last words of my text, praying that they may describe you—"The just shall live by his faith."

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

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S NAME
NO. 2592

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 16, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 7, 1883.

"And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which is by Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."
Acts 3:16.

You see, dear Friends, that this notable miracle was worked by means of the name of Jesus. Twice it is mentioned. "His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong." It will be well for us to look back to see what name it was which Peter had used in working this miracle of healing. Turn to the 6th verse. "Then Peter said. . .In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." He did not omit either of our Lord's names, nor did he flinch from telling the Jews that it was the same Jesus whom they had despised and called the Nazarene, or the Man of Nazareth. It is always well to adapt our speech to those who are about us. You remember how Cobbett said that he used the English language. "I speak," he said, "not only so that men can understand me if they will, but so that they cannot misunderstand me if they try to do so." And I believe that it is a very wise way of speaking when you wish to convince men concerning an important Truth of God which you desire to convey to their very heart. Peter here seems to say, "They shall not think that I am speaking of another Jesus, or of another Christ—it shall be, 'Jesus Christ.' Neither shall they imagine that there may be another anointed Jesus, but it shall be, 'Jesus Christ of Nazareth.'" And, afterwards, when he had used that name and the miracle had been worked, he went on still further to secure his purpose by making the most definite charges against his hearers, repeating them in detail, that they might know for sure that the Christ who had healed the lame man was the same Christ whom they had, with wicked hands, crucified and slain. It was important to convince them of this fact, that they might be brought to repentance concerning it, and then might be led to believe in that same Savior and find life and peace through Him!

I desire to speak just as plainly now and always, that God the Holy Spirit, who would have all His servants use great plainness of speech, may be pleased to bless what is said. My first remarks upon the text will be concerning *a name of power* and you will know the run of my thought when I tell you that I shall next speak upon *a case in proof of the power of that name.* And, thirdly—and a very important point this will be—I

shall mention *a necessity in reference to the use of that name if we desire to see the power of it.*

I. First, then, here is A NAME OF POWER. We will meditate for a while upon that name and consider each particular part of it. It was by that name, whatever it was, that this lame man was made strong. It was by faith in that name that he received, "perfect soundness."

The first name mentioned by Peter is, "Jesus." Of all the names of our blessed Lord, this is the most charming to our ears. Well might the Duke of Argyll say, when Rutherford began to speak upon the name, Jesus, "Ring that bell again." It has been so dear to Christians that they have tried to make something out of each syllable and even every letter of it—fancifully so, perhaps, but, still, thus clearly proving that the name was, indeed, as honey in their mouths, and as sweetest music in their ears.

Jesus signifies, Savior, and, for certain, He that was to save us had need of power. And we have cause to rejoice that our Jesus has all power in Heaven and in earth! If Joshua had power to bring the Israelites into the Promised Land and to drive out the Canaanites, much more power has our Lord Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, who will surely bring into the Heavenly Canaan all the chosen seed, driving before Him every enemy! He that is our Redeemer was also the Creator of everything that exists. "All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made." And He is also the Sustainer of all things. "By Him all things consist." He is a Savior, and a great one! Long before His birth, Isaiah wrote, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." In that name, Jesus, slumbers Omnipotence! The same power that made all worlds lies hidden in that name! The power that will raise the dead and make new heavens and a new earth, is in that name, saving this poor fallen world from all its degradation, cleansing the planet of all the mists that now surround it, and bidding it shine forth like all its sister stars, to the glory of God who made it! There is none like Jesus among all the sons of men—who among the mighty is like unto him, a Standard-Bearer among ten thousand and Himself the Altogether Lovely? That name of Jesus has infinite power in it, but we must not dwell on that name, alone, for Peter made use of others.

Next, consider the name which follows—"Christ." "The Messiah" was probably the term which Peter used in speaking to these people and it was the title which they would most readily recognize. "The Christ" is our name for Jesus. *The Sent One,* the believing Hebrews called Him—*the Anointed One,* we delight to call Him now. We see at once what wonderful power dwells in Jesus when we connect Him with His mission from God. He was no amateur Savior, but He was commissioned of the Father and He received of the Father all that was necessary for the accomplishment of the work He was sent to perform. In the waters of Baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, like a dove, and abode upon Him. And afterwards, the Father said once and yet again, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Jesus, being both sent and anointed of God, when we believe His Word, we know that He speaks as the Ambassador and Representative of God in Heaven. Yes, He is even more than that, for He is, Himself, "very

God of very God." When we trust His work, we know that we are trusting to a work which the Father covenanted of old to accept and which is part of the eternal purpose of the Ever-Blessed. We are not resting our souls in the hand of one who promises to save, but has no Divine credentials—He is Christ, the Anointed, according to that verse of the Psalmist—"You love righteousness, and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows." That subject of the anointing of Christ is a very large one and a very blessed one. Think it over prayerfully and gratefully. But, just now, it is enough for my purpose to merely mention that a part of the power of our Savior's name lies, first, in His personal title and office—Jesus, the Savior—and next, in the Character which has been bestowed upon Him as God's Anointed Representative. He does all that He does with the authority of the Eternal Jehovah and speaks to men as the fully-qualified Messenger of the Most High—Jesus, the Christ—the Anointed Savior!

But, oh, that other title, "Jesus Christ *of Nazareth"*—Peter did well to put it there, for though it doubtless provoked opposition, yet what would we have done? Where would the sweetness of the name of Jesus lie —if we could not connect it with all that is included in the mention of Nazareth? This term seems to bring the Savior—the Anointed One—into the most intimate connection with our poor fallen humanity! "Jesus Christ of Nazareth." Many thought that He was born there and though that was a mistake, yet it was there that He was brought up. And it was there that He spent those many years of His preparation. It was with that despised city and with a despised people, that the name, "Nazarene," still further connected Him. He was truly Man, "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." He was not called "Jesus Christ of Heaven," but, "Jesus Christ of Nazareth." His name is not associated with the grandest city on the earth—He is not called, "Jesus Christ of Jerusalem," though there He went, early in life, that He might be about His Father's business. And since it was the city of the great King, it was His city and, one day, "the Lord GOD shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." But for the present, we know Him as, "Jesus Christ of Nazareth"—Jesus Christ of a rustic people—Jesus Christ of those whom they called boors—Jesus Christ of the poor and needy—Jesus Christ of the artisan class and the carpenter's shop!

You know that at Nazareth, He was called the Carpenter's Son, so this name reminds us of Jesus Christ in His humiliation—Jesus Christ taking upon Himself the form of a Servant, and being made in the likeness of men, toiling and suffering. This is the name which, from its very weakness, is more full of strength than any other, for, inasmuch as Jesus descended into the deeps of our humanity, now has He ascended to the highest place in Glory! Though He came down and was lower than the angels for the suffering of death, yet, because of that very descent God has highly exalted Him and crowned Him with glory and honor! Blessed be the love that has raised so high Him who was known, here, as, "Jesus Christ of Nazareth."

Now this name, as Peter pronounced it, gave strength to the feet and ankle bones of the poor man who was lame from birth—"and he, leaping

up, stood and walked, and entered with them into the Temple, walking and leaping, and praising God." Before I speak to you specially about this miracle, I want, for a few minutes, to show you *what power there is in the name of Jesus.* The name of Jesus made the devils tremble! When they heard His name, they began to cry out, saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, You Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are, the Holy One of God." At the very mention of His name they began to quiver. That strong one, armed, who often keeps his house and keeps his goods in a horrible and deadly peace, yet knows well that there is One stronger than he is and the very footfall of Jesus makes him turn pale with dread! These two met in the wilderness—three times they closed in single combat and the devil remembers to this day the grip of those strong hands which afterwards destroyed his empire on the tree of Calvary! And, therefore, he does not want to come into collision with Him again—and he trembles at the very sound of His almighty name!

Remember also, dear Friends, that the name of "Jesus Christ of Nazareth" not only made devils tremble and cry out, but it cast them out of those whom they had tormented. Christ's disciples cast out devils in His name—the devils would not have gone because Peter, and James, and John, in their own names commanded them to depart. No, the devils would have laughed at them! And if the Apostles had argued or reasoned with them, they would not have stirred! But one hot shot, fired in the name of Jesus, made them quit the fortress instantly! They were great cowards whenever the name of Jesus was mentioned— they away fled down to the deeps, as they did when He allowed them to enter into the swine at Gadara.

A curious thing about that name of power is that it was able to cast out devils even when it was used by some who did not follow Christ. You remember that there was one who was a sort of freelance, who was not with our Lord's disciples—and that very orthodox Christian, the Apostle John, said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Your name and we forbid him because he follows not with us." Have not you and I also sometimes felt as if people had better not try to help in evangelizing the world because they do not work exactly in our way—our way, of course, being the most proper way possible? There are many people in the world who are very active in forbidding, but, "Jesus Christ of Nazareth" said to John, concerning this man who was casting out devils, "Forbid him not: for there is no man who shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me." What a power there must have been in the name of Jesus that even when it was mentioned by these irregular followers—these "unordained hedge-priests," as some would have called them. These people that had taken to preaching without having a bishop's hands laid on their heads in proper style—even when *they* mentioned the name of Jesus, away went the devils!

And, what is still more marvelous, even when *ungodly men* mentioned that name, the devils had to depart because the force does not lie in the person using the name, but in the *name itself*. "Unto the wicked, God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My Covenant in your mouth?" Yet, again and again, Christ has hon-

ored His name even when ungodly men have used it! In due time, He will let the ungodly know how evilly they dealt with His holy name, but for the honor of His name He has proved what it could accomplish even by them. You know how our Lord told His disciples that there will be many who, at the last, will say to Him, "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?" But Christ's answer to them will be, "I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity." They were even working iniquity while they were mentioning Christ's name, for with *them* it was an iniquity that they should have presumed to do so! Yet the name, itself, was not robbed of its power. Albeit it was out of its element and, probably, might not exert all its force under such circumstances, yet if it came into contact with a devil, sooner than the devil should conquer Christ's name, God would acknowledge that name even when a worker of iniquity used it! So it was in Christ's day and so has it been since. What power there is, then, in that name!

We know, besides, dear Friends, from Scripture, that as the name of Jesus had power with devils, so it also had power with men. All forms of sickness yielded to that name. There was great force in the argument implied in the Centurion's words when he sent to Christ, saying, "Lord, trouble not Yourself: for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto You: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it." He recognized that Christ was commissioned of God and that, therefore, He had Divine authority at the back of Him. Jesus had but to speak and His Word was potent with leprosies, with fevers—yes, and with death, itself—and His servants also proved the power of His name in healing the sick. In the case of this lame man, "His name through faith in His name" had made the cripple strong and given Him "perfect soundness" in the presence of all the people.

Once more, the name of Jesus is, indeed, mighty, for it has power with God Himself! Hence it is that we never pray without using that blessed name, that is to say, if we are wise. We love to feel all through our prayer and to say when it is ended, "In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." The keys of Heaven are in the hands of that man who knows how to use aright the name of Jesus! In your deepest sorrow, this name, like a life-belt, shall keep you afloat on the very crest of the billows if you can but plead it before God! When you appear to have no arguments in prayer and Heaven seems like brass above your head, use but the name of Jesus and your prayer shall enter into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth—and infinite blessing shall come streaming down to you! The name of Jesus is a mighty power in Heaven, in earth and in the deep places under the earth! There is no part of the universe where the King's name is without influence! The warrant from His Throne may be executed among angels, among devils and certainly shall not be powerless among the sons of men! "Where the word of a king is, there is power." And where the name of the King of Kings is on the proclamation, who shall be able to resist it? The name of "Jesus Christ of Nazareth" is full of

power! Oh, that those who are Believers would more and more prove its power! And that those who are not Believers may soon feel its gracious influence! May this double result follow from our gathering here—and unto His name shall be praise and glory, world without end!

II. But now, secondly, I have to call your attention to A CASE IN PROOF OF THE POWER OF CHRIST'S NAME.

The case in proof is this. There was a man who, being born lame, was, all of a sudden, perfectly restored! Not by the use of any medicine or surgery, but simply by the Apostle Peter's utterance of these words, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." *The man had never walked,* so you must remember that when the power came into his feet and ankle bones, he did not know how to walk! You know that you have to teach your children to walk. As they gather strength, they acquire the art, for there is an art in it—and I should suppose that if a man had been lame from his birth and a surgeon could suddenly make his ankle bones strong, he would not be able to walk. He would not know what to do with his legs, having never used them. Certainly, he would be exceedingly awkward in his first movements.

But this man went through his gymnastic lessons very rapidly when the miracle was worked on him, for he walked, he ran, he leaped to the glory of God—and that all of a sudden! "But," says one, "he was a beggar and, perhaps, he had shammed lameness." No, he had not, for he had been carried and laid daily at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. And, as Dean Afford very properly remarks, this was a clear proof that he was really lame because no beggar would pay a man to carry him, and so have to divide the alms which he received. No, a man who was shamming lameness would get there as much unseen as possible, but he would not pay his bearers. And I suppose that they would not have carried him unless they had been paid. If we had to carry a heavy fellow every morning—and we had any suspicion that he could walk if he chose—we should drop him and, in a very short time, he would have to find out that he could not be carried about if he could walk! And I daresay that he would soon take to his legs. This is part of the proof that this was a real case of lifelong lameness.

This man, in his sad state through congenital lameness, *sat there begging.* I do not say that all forms of beggary have the same influence upon all men, but, as far as my observation goes, begging is a very degrading business. I would suppose that persons have risen out of almost all ranks of society and have attained to eminence—and that out of every trade men of genius have come. But beggary, somehow, represses and quenches anything like a spark of genius within the spirit. Many of the mendicants whom one has seen give this impression—and in foreign travel one has sometimes been beset by scores and even hundreds of them! In some lands the police strike them and drive them away, as if they were so many dogs. And certainly the Neapolitan *lazzaroni* are by no means desirable companions. As I have looked into the faces of these people, they have seemed to me as if hardly anything could raise them from their degradation. It was probably much the same with this man who was not only lame in his feet, but had gradually become very lame in his soul. Yet, notwithstanding all that, the name of Jesus kindled his

very heart—it entered his inmost soul and penetrated the very marrow of his being, so that he became capable of the same faith that was in the soul of Peter—and he was able to trust in Jesus, if not at once to the same degree, yet with the same truthfulness as John, who stood there and looked upon him! Our Lord Jesus gazes upon all of us, wherever we may be, with an eye of pity. And if there are any who are degraded, not merely by poverty, but also by sin—if any have sunk as low as human beings can sink—He is still able, by that mighty name of His, to bring them again from Bashan, yes, to bring up His people from the depths of the sea! Oh, the glory of that matchless name!

The way that Peter and John went to work was very wise. *The man could not walk, but he could look,* so they first of all called his attention to themselves by saying, "Look at us," in order that he might be ready to listen to their message and might know what they said, partly by seeing what they did, for, in hearing, though we cannot hear with our eyes, yet, somehow, the eye mightily helps when the preacher has any kind of action whatever. And Peter needed to have action in his sermon on this occasion.

Having attracted the man's full attention, *Peter commanded him to rise and walk.* He not merely told him what he was to do, but he said to him, in tones of authority, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Having given the command and perceiving that the man was ready to obey it, *Peter helped him to obey it.* And, as he raised him up, the strength came into his ankle bones so fast that the man sprang up! And he was so thoroughly cured that he began at once to walk and to leap!

What this man really did was to yield to the gentle pressure that Peter put upon him. After the word of command was given, he expected that power would come with that command and, yielding and expecting, he was incited to make the attempt to rise. He did make the attempt and up he stood, exerting the power as God was pleased to grant it to him! He stood! He walked! He leaped! And in it all he was "praising God." Surely there never came from any lips a song that was more true than his! I think I see him leap up and say, "Hallelujah!" And then leap up, again, and then again, showing to everybody how perfect was the cure, letting everyone see what perfect soundness he had received—and all the while saying, "Bless the Lord! Bless the Lord!" There never was before their eyes a finer specimen of what the name of Christ could do! I am not going to dwell upon that point because it is clear enough, and every converted man is just as plainly a proof of Christ's power. He, too, hears the word of command. He, too, obeys and, when he obeys, the strength goes with the command! And, obeying, he, also, is made perfectly whole!

III. I shall need you to think of that case in proof while I close my discourse with this point—A NECESSITY IN REFERENCE TO THE USE OF THAT NAME OF POWER if we would see blessed results following.

Let me read the text to you again, that you may see how very remarkably the name of Christ and faith are mixed up. They both occur twice in the verse. What was it that worked the miracle? Was it the name of Christ, or was it faith in that name? Listen—"His name through faith in His name has made this man strong, whom you see and know." And then it is added, "Yes, the faith which is by Him has given him this per-

fect soundness in the presence of you all," as if to put the crown on the head of faith rather than on the name of Christ, for faith is sure never to steal that crown. Faith always crowns Christ and, therefore, Christ crowns faith. "Your faith has saved you," said Christ to the woman that was a sinner. "No," says someone, "it was Christ who saved her." That is also true, but Christ said that it was her faith that saved her, and He knew. So here, it was the name of Christ that worked the miracle, but it was worked through faith in that name.

Whose faith was it? It would puzzle any of us to tell for certain except we say that it was the faith of all three. I believe that, first, it *was the faith of Peter and John.* It was their faith that brought healing to this man, just as when, on another occasion, when the man was let down by his friends into Christ's Presence, He saw *their* faith and said to the sick of the palsy, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." In this case, it was beyond doubt the faith of Peter and John that made them use the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. It was their faith that made them give the command, "Rise up and walk." It was their faith that made Peter stretch out his hand, expecting that by helping the man, he would be restored.

Now, dear Friends, you and I go forth—the most of us—to preach and to teach. I am happy to be able to say the most of us, for there are very many here who, in one way or another, are busy in the Lord's service. When we go to speak to men, let us always go in the name of Christ. If we go in our own name—well, they may receive us or reject us as they please, without any sin, but if we go in the name of Christ, we can plead His own Words, "he that despises you, despises Me." We may speak very boldly and very positively when we speak in His name. If you have any doubt about what you are going to preach, do not preach till you have gotten rid of your doubts. If you have smoke in your room, do not ask your friend in—enjoy it yourself if you like it, but, until the chimney has been swept and the air has been purified—do not invite visitors. Doubts about this doctrine and that had better not be brought forward by us—we certainly cannot expect to do any good by what we, ourselves, do not believe! We must preach that which we are sure is true because we dare set the hand and seal of Christ to it as the very Truth of God which He has made us to know by the effectual working of His *Holy* Spirit.

Then, next, we must command men to believe. I do not think that there is enough of this done by any of us. We ought to say to them, not merely as an entreaty, "Please, believe in Christ," but as a *command*, "Believe in Christ!" Oh, that we had faith enough, sometimes, to address people in that fashion! There are some who do not appear to have any faith at all, for they say, "It is no use telling dead sinners to believe." Probably it would be no use for *them* to do it. I heard one of them say, "You might as well shake a handkerchief over the dead in their graves, as bid sinners believe." So they might, because they have not faith. But preaching is an exercise of faith and when we address sinners, it ought to be as if we were about to work a miracle! We should never go to talk to a single sinner, or to a Sunday school class, or to a congregation as if we had any power whatever in ourselves to influence them. We must go in the name of Christ to be miracle-workers and say to the sinner, "Believe in Jesus. We command you, in Christ's name, to believe on Him." My

dear Friends, here, who are unconverted, it is not a thing that you *may* do, or *may not* do, just as you like. It is God's command that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent—a command which He has sanctioned by a most solemn threat—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." Nothing could be more solemn than that!

Remember how Paul spoke to the Athenians on Mars' Hill? "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to repent." The Gospel is in the nature of a command of Christ! And what if they say, "There is no power in the creature"? That is quite true! Was there any power in Lazarus when Jesus said to him, "Lazarus, come forth"? No, but Lazarus came forth as Christ commanded him. And He still bids His servants say, "You deaf, hear the Word of the Lord. You dead, awake and arise." This is even as Ezekiel spoke in the Valley of Vision. "Thus says the Lord, you dry bones live." If we can speak like that, it will be by our faith that the man with no strength receives strength.

After giving the command, we are still to believe and to put out our hand to help the man who is going to rise. That is the work of those who look after people when the sermon is done. Two or three Friends here (I wish there were more of them) always expect to see converts after every service. You will see them on the lookout in the aisles or at the doorways as soon as I have finished. And some of them, I daresay, have been on the watch at the back of the galleries even while I have been preaching. Perhaps they have brought you here, or else somebody else has brought you here and that somebody else has let them know, that they may be after you. They want to give you a hand, to help you up out of your lameness, that you may leap up and begin to praise the name of the Lord!

Still, lest I should send you away with any mistake upon your mind, let me say that *this man would not have been healed if it had not been for his own faith.* There must be the personal faith of the saved one. And that this man had faith, I firmly believe, because he went into the Temple praising God. He did not receive the blessing and then have a dead, cold heart about it. He began at once to praise the Lord. What did this man do? When he was told to look at the Apostles, he did so. He attended to their words and when they told him to rise, he yielded to them. He did not say, "I cannot," but he made an attempt to rise and yielding, he believed that what they said could not be said in mockery—that if he was commanded to rise, he would be enabled to rise. I would that some poor sinner here would think after the same fashion—"I was not brought to the Tabernacle tonight for Mr. Spurgeon to tell me to believe in Jesus—and for me to wish to believe in Him, to desire to believe in Him, to attempt to believe in Him and yet for me not to find the strength to do it." The Gospel is never sent to mock any of you, depend upon that! God has set before you an open door—not a closed one. Or if it seems to be closed, He bids you knock and He will open it to you.

Some will not knock, they will not believe. They get into a sullen state of desperate despair and they will not rise. But the poor soul whom God blesses, no sooner hears the command than he is on the alert to obey! And he no sooner feels the cheering touch of the friend who has come to help him up, than he responds to it. And though he has no strength of

his own, the needed strength comes pouring in and he stands! Oh, how surprised he is to find that he can stand! What a treat it is to stand! I know what a pleasure it is to be able to walk across the room and downstairs, with the aid of a cane, after I have been unable to put my feet to the ground for weeks. But I cannot know a thousandth part of the pleasure of this man, who had never walked a step, when he followed the two Apostles who had spoken to him in the name of "Jesus Christ of Nazareth!" He not only walked, but he felt strength enough to leap! And then he cried, with all his might, "Hallelujah! Bless the Lord!" till all the people around took up the strain. Well, that may happen to you, also, dear Friend. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved"—saved at this very moment! God grant it, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 3:1-21

Verse 1. *Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.* Peter and John seem to have been linked in closest friendship. Peter had been brought back by John when he was almost despairing after having denied his Master. John lovingly found him and made him his associate. And now they "went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer." Observe, here, how very sweetly the Old Testament dispensation melts into the new. The Temple was no longer what it had been before. The type was of no further use, now that the great Antitype of the Temple had come. Yet these Apostles still went up to it at the hour of prayer. There are some men who are great at destroying. It will be time to destroy the old when the new is quite ready, and even then it may be very possible to let the darkness gradually melt away into a twilight, and so the day shall come with no great gap, no marked surprise. So Peter and John went up to the Temple at the same hour as others went. It is folly to be singular, except when to be singular is to be something more right than others.

2, 3. *And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked for an alms.* This seems to have been the custom about the Temple gates, as it is about the doors of many churches on the Continent. For instance, you could not approach the door of a certain church in Rome without being solicited, perhaps, by a score of beggars. I do not suppose that it was so in Judea in its prosperous days, but when religion does not prosper, beggars are sure to be multiplied. And now that the very spirit of godliness had gone, almsgiving was done in public, and hence the beggars appeared in public.

4-7. *And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, I give to you: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.* The man had never stood upon his

feet in all his life and was so unable to move that he had to be carried to the Temple gates to beg. And yet, at the mention of the great and glorious name of Jesus, his feet and ankle bones immediately received strength!

8-11. *And he, leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God: and they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. And as the lame man which was healed, held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.* You are not at all surprised that he held Peter and John—it was but natural that he should follow them wherever they went, for he owed so much to them and they were the best friends that he had ever had! He was filled with reverence for them because of what they had worked upon him and now, lest they should go away, he held them. And "all the people ran together unto them, greatly wondering." He who was healed by Christ's wonderful name was wondering, and the people who saw him healed were all wondering. I suppose that wonder mingles with all true worship. All wonder is not worship, but where there is adoration of God and a sense of His great goodness and of our unworthiness, there seems always to be a large amount of wonder. We shall even—

"Sing with wonder and surprise,
His loving kindness in the skies."

12. *And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the peop1e, You men of Israel, why marvel you at this? Or why look you so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?* Peter could well see that the people attributed to himself and John more than was right, so he thus had an opportunity of preaching the Gospel to them—and you may be certain that he did not miss it!

13. *The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Son Jesus.* Or, rather, as you have it in the Revised Version with more correctness, "has glorified His Servant Jesus," for His Son may be said to be already glorified. But Jesus had taken upon Himself the form of a Servant, and God had "glorified His Servant Jesus."

13-15. *Whom you delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of Life, whom God has raised from the dead; of which we are witnesses.* I want you to note, here, how Peter will have it that the God of the Gospel is the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. I do not hesitate to say that the god of a large number of professors, now, is not the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. And the reason I say so is this—they often treat the Old Testament as if it were an altogether secondary volume and speak about the imperfect ideas of God which the Hebrews had, and the imperfect Revelation of God in the Old Testament. I believe that Jehovah—that very Jehovah who divided the Red Sea and drowned the Egyptians—the terrible God of the Old Testament—is the same God who is the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And we are to take the Godhead as it is revealed, not only in the New Testament,

but also in the Old Testament. There are some who would pick and choose that part of Scripture which they like best and construct a god for themselves out of those chosen texts. These are they who have other gods before Jehovah. And these are they who make unto themselves an image which, if it is not engraved upon stone, is yet made out of their own imaginations which they set up and worship in the place of the one living and true God. "The God of our fathers has glorified His Son Jesus; whom you delivered up and denied." See how plainspoken Peter is—how boldly he presses home upon the crowd around him the murder of Christ—the rejection of the Messiah? It took no small amount of courage and faith to speak like that and to speak so to persons who were full of admiration of him, before, and who would be pretty sure to be filled with indignation against him directly! A man can speak boldly against those who are his enemies, but, when people begin to flatter you and admire you, a softness steals over the bravest heart and he is inclined to be very gentle. I admire Peter that he puts it thus so plainly—"You denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of Life, whom God has raised from the dead; of which we are witnesses."

16. *And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know.* "You see him, now, and you know what he used to be. There is no question about the identity of the man."

16, 17. *Yes, the faith which is by Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it.* How like his Master does Peter now speak! Instead of drawing his sword, as he did when he cut off the ear of Malchus, he puts the Truth of God thus mildly. "I know that through ignorance you did it."

17-21. *As did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all His Prophets, that Christ should suffer, He has so fulfilled. Repent you, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the Heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy Prophets since the world began.*

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"And it came to pass, that when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received Him, for they were all waiting for Him."
Luke 8:40.

THE Revised Version is, in some places, though not in many, better than the Authorized Version. Our text is one of the few instances in which there is an improvement—"And as Jesus returned, *the multitude welcomed Him,* for they were all waiting for Him."

We have already noted, in our reading, that our Lord had gone where He was not welcomed. He went across the Sea of Galilee to the country of the Gadarenes and there He met with an ill reception and was even entreated by the people to depart out of their coasts. Yet, although Jesus knew beforehand the treatment He would receive there, He went. He did not stay there long, but He remained long enough to effect a grand purpose of Grace. Upon His landing on that inhospitable shore, a poor creature, held in captivity by a legion of demons, was set free and, that done, the Master yielded to the unwise, ungracious, unkind request of the Gadarenes and went His way back across the sea.

The Lord Jesus Christ may still come to a family that does not want Him, does not wish to have Him. A man of God may pass that way and tarry for a night. The Gospel itself may be carried to people in a certain quarter and they may hear it, though they have no wish to do so. Well, if this is your feeling, my Hearers, do not be burdened with what you consider the great calamity of Christ coming near you! Do not be disturbed by the fear that you will be forced to be saved against your will! The Lord Jesus Christ will not stay where He is not wanted. As He bade His Apostles, when they were persecuted in one city, to flee to another, so He does Himself. If He is not received here, He will go elsewhere. Yet I trust that, at least, He will not leave your family, that He will not leave your ungodly neighborhood—until He has won from it some trophy of His Grace—until He has taken "one of a city, and two of a family," to "bring you to Zion."

He still delights to gather to Himself unruly ones whom He will tame, unclothed ones whom He will robe in the garments of righteousness, and demon-possessed ones whom He will cause to sit at His feet, as the Gadara demoniac did when he was restored to his right mind. I have seen this happen again and again, and it has been a blessed thing for those whom Christ has thus rescued and saved. He has gone away, at the request of those who did not wish for Him, yet He has not gone till He

has left behind Him a witness to His power who has continued, after His departure, to tell what the Lord has done for him! Thus a tree has been planted which Satan cannot pluck up and a light has been kindled which all the powers of darkness cannot blow out! Yet, alas, there are still some who do not want Christ and who treat Him so ill that He goes away from them, as He returned from the coasts of Gadara.

But now look at the other side of the narrative and learn from it that while some will not receive Christ, there are others who are anxious that He should come to them. When Jesus took ship and crossed over to the other side of the sea, "the multitude welcomed Him, for they were all waiting for Him." Minister of Christ, servant of the Lord, if you are rejected in one place, you shall be received in another! If, today, you have to shake off the dust of your feet against impenitent hearers, it may be that, tomorrow, you shall find some whose hearts the Lord has opened, who will gladly receive your message, who will come to Christ and find salvation in Him. What a mercy it is that all ground is not stony ground! There is yet some "honest and good ground." It is not everywhere that the door is shut, so that God's servants cannot enter, but, in many places, an abundant entrance is made by the power of the Holy Spirit, and God's servants are able to step in. Wherever Christ is welcomed, there we may expect to see His power displayed.

As we read the chapter, we saw that it was so in this instance. The people waited. The people welcomed and then Christ put forth His power until the people wondered. If we are, at this time, waiting for Christ, and if we now welcome Christ, we shall, by-and-by, become a wondering assembly, marveling at what the Grace of God has done among us!

I am going to divide my subject in this way. First, here is *a beautiful sight.* "They were all waiting for Him." Secondly, here is a sure *arrival.* "Jesus returned." The people were all waiting for Him, so He came to them. And, thirdly, here is *a hearty welcome.* "The multitude welcomed Him, for they were all waiting for Him."

I. First, then, here is A BEAUTIFUL SIGHT. "They were all waiting for Him." I shall try to show you this beautiful sight in four pictures.

I think that it is a very beautiful sight, first, to see *a waiting assembly* when all the people have come together—not to hear fine music, or merely to listen to the voice of a man, but anxious to meet with God, desirous to feel the power of Jesus Christ! Happy preacher who has to address such an audience! Happy audience that has been brought into such a condition! "They were all waiting for Him." Just for a minute or two look at our ordinary congregations and see if our text is true concerning them. Alas, the people are not all waiting for Jesus, for they have not all assembled at the hour of worship! A few come on time and take their seats, but it is not so with others. I am not speaking of you, my Hearers, for I exempt you from this description. You would not get in if you came late, so you do not generally attempt it, but you know how it is in many places.

Here they come—detachment of late-comers stamping up the aisle, interrupting the first prayer. Others come straggling in all through the reading of the Scriptures. God's Word seems so contemptible in their esteem that they tramp up the aisle as if it were some unimportant book

that was being read. Then comes the singing and some join in it heartily. But others do not even know what hymn it is, for they have only just arrived. And I have known some friends, in certain places, come so late that the minister had almost finished his sermon—and they were just in time to go home with the congregation! This ought not to be the case anywhere and is not the case where all are waiting for Jesus. I like the thought of the good woman who said that she never went to a service late for it was part of her religion not to disturb the worship of other people. I wish many more agreed with her. Oh, how much loss of spirituality, how much loss of blessing has come by that straggling in, one by one, instead of all being assembled, waiting for the Savior with such due respect to His holy name that they would not think of being late!

He who goes to see an *earthly* king is surely punctual! He would sooner wait an hour in the anteroom than keep the monarch waiting a moment. But what shall I say of those who seem as if it were a painful operation to join in the worship of God and so postpone that operation to the last possible moment? That was a beautiful sight in the house of Cornelius the Centurion, when he had fetched in all his kinsmen and near friends before Peter arrived, so that he could say to the Apostle, "Now, therefore, we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded you of God." They were all there, all ready, all waiting, all prepared to hear and all glad to hear! The more of such congregations there are, the more will the Spirit of God work, the more numerous will be the converts and the more will Christ's Kingdom spread among men!

I say all this because I know that there are many people from other places who are worshipping with us and I know, also, from observation, how many there are who look upon the House of God as a place into which they may stray at any time they please. Let it not be so with you, dear Friends, wherever you worship—but let it be said of you whenever Christ comes to the congregation—"They are all waiting for Him."

A second picture, more beautiful, still, is to see a Church waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ—a *prayerful congregation met together to seek a revival of religion through the more manifest Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in their midst.* I wish that all the members of churches that are in a declining state would say to themselves, "This state of things will never do. We cannot endure this dullness and deadness." Or, if the whole church will not say it, it would be a great mercy if some dozen or score of faithful men and women would meet together and say, "We cannot bear to have these Sabbath services and weeknight meetings without any converts. Month after month passing and no additions to the Church, no apparent power with the Word." I would not wish them to meet together to censure, to criticize, or to pour out their common complaints, but I would have them gather distinctly to wait upon the Lord in prayer, pleading His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

I think I see such an assembly as that, all earnestly pleading with the Lord, all surrounding the Mercy Seat, laying hold of strong arguments from the Word and pleading them before God. I watch them as they have separated and gone home—they are still praying and they will meet to-

gether, again, at the first opportunity. And with more tears and greater urgency, they will present the same earnest cry, "Return unto us, O Lord Jesus! Return, we beseech You, O God of Hosts! Look down from Heaven and behold, and visit this vine and the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, and the branch that You made strong for Yourself! O Shepherd of Israel, the drought has been long, the pastures are dry, the very earth is parched—we entreat you to fill the clouds with rain and water us with Grace—and make our barrenness to depart and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose." In imagination, I see these people coming together week after week—frequently pleading alone, and then pleading in company, making the Mercy Seat at the family altar to echo the same cry—and then, after they have prayed, they are all waiting, men and women and children, saying, "When will Jesus come?" They are hoping that there will be better preaching and that their fellow church members and especially that they, themselves, may be more spiritual. They are looking about the congregation to see whether there are any tokens of converts or anxious souls. They are all on the alert, expecting an answer to their prayers and, therefore, waiting for that answer and ready, as soon as God sends the fruit, to gather it from the tree and store it up!

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we shall see greater things than these if we once get into that blessed condition, so that it can be said of us, "They were all waiting for Him." If we have such Prayer Meetings as that tomorrow—which is our day of special prayer in connection with the College Conference—what a day of prayer it will be—all with one accord in one place crying for the blessing! We might expect to have another Pentecost to make our hearts leap within us with gratitude and praise to God. "They were all waiting for Him"—oh, what a lovely sight—lovely in the eyes of angels and of the angels' Master, to see His people all waiting for Him!

Now for the third beautiful picture which is, a seeking sinner *waiting for Christ in confession and prayer.* He is upstairs in the quiet of his own room. No one but God sees him, for he has taken care to shut the door. He is kneeling at his bedside. He says little, but he weeps much. He cannot utter many words, but his heart is breaking with his longing desire after Christ. He confesses his unworthiness. He knows that if Jesus of Nazareth passes by and lets him still remain in darkness, he deserves it. He bows his head low before the Lord and cries, "I have sinned." After a while, he begins to plead the promise, "You have said, 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.' Lord, I come to You! I am waiting for You! Come to me!" Mark his struggling faith. He says, "Lord, teach me how to believe, and let me know what it is to trust You! Gladly would I do so. I hope I do. 'Lord, I believe; help You mine unbelief!'" Still more fervently he cries, "Lord, give me rest! Lord, come and take away the burden of my sin! Lord, I beseech You, shine upon me! Now, for weeks, I have cried to You. When will You come to me? Lord, these many months have I bowed at the foot of Your Cross and I have tried to look up, but, as yet, I see no light. Possibly, it is my ignorance that hides You from my eyes. Maybe it is my unbelief. Perhaps it is some sin I am still harboring. If so, Lord—

'The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,

Help me to tear it from Your Throne,
And worship only Thee.'"

I said it was a beautiful sight that I was going to describe to you—and so it is. Yet there are, in such a scene, sighs and groans, and tears, and sobs—and men who love the pleasures of the world flee from it. But angels stand gazing with their finger on their lips and when, at last, they break the silence, the holy ones whisper, one to another, "Behold, he prays." And then their next word is, "Let us up and away to tell the bright spirits before the Throne of God, for this man that prays is not far from the Kingdom, and we must bid them rejoice with us over one sinner that repents." Oh, that there may be many such among us! These will be precious gems in the crown of King Jesus! While many a boastful professor shall be passed by, the humble seeker who is waiting for Christ shall have his name recorded on the tablets of the Redeemer's heart!

Now one more picture, that of *a departing saint, longing for Home*—such a picture as you will make, I hope, dear Friend, by-and-by—such a picture as I hope to make when my turn shall come. The battle is fought and the victory is won forever! The man is propped up in his bed with pillows, for life is fast ebbing and strength is failing him. You can hear him say, in short broken sentences, "I have waited. I have waited. I have waited for Your salvation, O Lord! I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait and on His Word do I hope. Why are His chariots so long in coming?" His friends step very softly across the room. It is so quiet and still that you can hear the clock tick. He is waiting—waiting for his Lord, while in his inmost soul he is singing—

"My heart is with Him on His throne,
And ill can brook delay.
Each moment listening for the voice,
'Rise up, and come away.'"

He has closed his eyes. He is gone. It is all over in this world. He has entered into his rest. Thus Jesus comes to those that wait for Him.

I would begin to wait for Him now, dear Brothers and Sisters, while yet in health and strength. *Wait and watch for the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*, which is the joy and hope of His whole Church! Wait and watch for the opened Heaven, for the descent on Olivet on that day when He, who was seen to go up into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as He went up! And if you fall asleep before that wish of yours shall be fulfilled, yet this shall be your joy—that you were among those who watched and waited for your Lord, and you shall enter into His joy!

Thus have I set before you the picture in four panels which my mind's eye sees in the last words of our text—"They were all waiting for Him."

II. Now let us turn to the second point, A SURE ARRIVAL—"Jesus returned." Men never wait in vain for Christ—if they are truly waiting for Him, He will come to them. How do we know this?

Well, we infer it, first, from the fact that *His Spirit is there already*. Brethren, are you waiting for Christ? Who but the blessed Spirit of God made you wait? There was a time when you would have been like the Gadarenes and would have asked Him to depart from you. But now the longing, the pining, the fainting, the swooning are all proofs of His Spirit's work within you. Where His Spirit is, there Christ will surely be.

Indeed, He is there by His Spirit. He never set a soul hungering without intending to feed it with the Bread of Life. He never made a spirit thirst without meaning to fill it with the Water of Life. You can be sure that if you are waiting for Him, He will come to you, for His Spirit is already with you.

Next, we know that He will come because *His heart is there.* If ever there is a heart that wants Christ, Christ wants that heart! If you have only one grain of desire towards Christ, Christ has a mountain of desire towards you. There never was a sinner yet who had a head start on Christ—if there is one who is waiting for Christ, He is there already! I tell you, my waiting Brother or Sister, Christ looks upon you with the deepest sympathy. He knows all your desires. He even finds music in your groans! He bottles up your tears, for He sees beauty in every sorrowful drop that distils from your eyes. Be of good courage, for, if you desire Him, He also desires you—and where Christ's heart is, He Himself will be, before long! If His Spirit is working within you and His heart is already with you, He will surely come to you.

I also know that He will come because *His work is there.* I expect to find you, tomorrow morning, dear Brother, where your work is. My Sisters, I expect to find you in the house where your work is. Where, then, is Christ's work but in longing, anxious, breaking hearts? What does Christ do? According to the Psalmist, beside all His other work, He does two things—"He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names." And, wonder of wonders, at the same moment, "He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds." Our Lord Jesus is just as much at home in binding up wounds as He is in guiding stars—these two works are equally pleasing to Him—no, the latter is the choicer work of the two. So then, if you are waiting for Him, He will surely come to you, for His business lies your way. He has work to do in you.

This is not all. *He has given us His promise that He will come.* "They that seek Me early shall find Me." That is a promise which refers to the young, but it refers to the old, too. If they are seeking Him with such earnest longing that they seek Him early in the morning, or seek Him at once, they shall surely find Him. "for everyone that asks, receives, and He that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks, it shall be opened." These are our Lord's own words, so He will not let you wait for Him in vain, you may depend upon that! His promise tells you so.

Besides that, there is an experience which many of us have had which we would like to tell you for your encouragement. *It is Christ's custom to come to waiting souls.* I can speak for many Brothers and Sisters here, as well as for myself, when I say that, "I sought the Lord and He heard me." "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." I was so foolish when I was seeking the Savior that, for a long time, I said to myself, "The Lord Jesus will hear my brother. He will hear my sister. He will be gracious to my father and my mother, but not to me." The devil said, "Your name is not on the roll of Christ's redeemed ones." How did he know? He had never read it. How could I tell? I had never seen it. When any man says to me, "Suppose I am not elect," I usually answer, "Suppose you are. And suppose both you and I leave off supposing and go to work upon certainty instead of supposition. Is not that a wise thing to do? Now, Christ

has said, 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.' Will not the wisest thing for us to do be to go and see whether He will cast us out?" And, dear Friends, if He does cast any one of you out, I should like you to let me know of it, for I have gone up and down the land, these many years, telling everybody that Christ never did cast a sinner out and I do not wish to say what is not true. If He does cast out one who comes to Him, I shall have to amend my testimony—at least I shall have to stay at home and hold my tongue—if you can tell me, assuredly, that you went to Christ and He cast you out!

Sirs, I tell you that there is not, even among the damned in Hell, a single one who dares to say that he sought the Lord, and the Lord would not be found of him! There never shall be one among lost spirits who shall dare to say, "I trusted in Christ and He did not save me. I sought Him, but He would not look upon me." It cannot be so! Come along with you, then, I pray you, and end all questions and supposing by humbly casting yourself down at Jesus' feet and trusting in Him! You shall not die, but shall live forever and ever!

Thus have I spoken upon a sure arrival—Christ will come to those who wait for Him

III. Now, lastly, those who have waited for Christ are sure to give Him A HEARTY WELCOME when He does come. I know that for certain because many things will lead them to do so.

First, *their fears.* You know that at the time mentioned in our text, the people came down to the shore of the Sea of Galilee and waited, and watched, and looked everywhere for Christ. He was gone. He who had fed them was gone. He who had healed their sick was gone. They said, one to another, "Which way did He go?" And the answer was, "He sailed across the sea and there was a storm that night—and He has not come back." They may have said, "Perhaps He never will come back." And some of the Galileans may have sadly added, "Alas, we did not treat Him well when He was here. We did not honor and reverence Him as we ought to have done and now, possibly, we shall never see Him again." Among them was that poor woman with the issue of blood—and she would say, "Ah, if He does not come back, then I cannot be healed. I have not a penny left to spend on another doctor! And if I had, I would probably only get worse instead of better." There was Jarius also, the ruler of the synagogue, and he was asking, "Where is the great Prophet? Do you think He will come back? My dear little girl, my only daughter, is getting worse and worse. I fear she is dying. Would God He were back, for He might heal her! If He does not return soon, she will be dead before He comes. And then what shall I do?"

Then there was the poor paralyzed man who had four friends who promised that they would get him to Christ somehow or other, even if they had to pull the roof off the house. They meant to take Him to Jesus. As he lay there, he seemed to say, "Ah, me, I have my bearers willing to carry me into His Presence, but perhaps He will never come back! Perhaps He has gone away altogether." Now, whenever that fear comes into a man's mind, through long waiting for Jesus, till he says, "Perhaps He will not come! Perhaps He will never smile upon me. Perhaps He will never hear my prayer"—when Jesus does appear, how gladly He is wel-

comed! From many a heart and lips goes up the cry, "He comes! He comes! 'Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.'" Among the waiting ones who are sure to welcome Christ when He comes are those who have been troubled by fears concerning His absence.

Then, besides, *their hopes* made them welcome Him when He did come. The poor woman with the issue of blood said, "If He does come, perhaps I may be healed, so I hope He will return." And Jarius cried, "Oh, if He will but come in time, my dear child may yet be spared!" And the poor paralytic said, "If He will but come—if I may but hear the music of His footfall and listen to the charm of that dear voice, and look into those loving eyes, I may yet be restored!" So, when Jesus did return, the hopes of those who had been waiting for Him caused their hearts to dance within them and made them give Him a hearty welcome! Ten thousand million welcomes are due to the Savior who breeds such bright hopes within our spirits! Oh, if He comes to *you,* my Friend, how welcome He will be! How gladly will you receive Him! If any of you have no fears and no hopes concerning Christ, God have mercy on you! But such as have the fears and the hopes of which I have been speaking will be sure to welcome the coming Christ.

In addition to hopes and fears, there were many other things that made these people welcome Jesus. For instance, *their prayers.* When a man has long prayed for Christ, he will at last say, with the Psalmist, "My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning." And this kind of prayer creates within the spirit such a thirst that when the fresh waters of Christ's Presence flow, then does the man welcome Him with unbounded joy!

And *their faith,* too, helped them to welcome Christ when He returned. When a man is truly trusting Christ and yet has no sensible realization of His Presence—when a man is really reposing upon Christ and yet does not, at the time, feel the comfort of full assurance—when at last Christ comes to Him and fully reveals Himself in all His preciousness and beauty, how heartily does such a man welcome his Lord and Savior!

And *their love,* also, helped these people to welcome Christ. And O, my Soul, what joy it is to you to get into Christ's company now that you have learned to love Him! My Brothers and Sisters, this is our Heaven below, is it not? In all the vehemence of our love which burns like coals of juniper, the Presence of Christ is most welcome to us. Oh, for but one glimpse of His eyes, for He has ravished our heart! Oh, but to hear the tinkling of the bells upon our High Priest's garments, though the sound is soft and low! Oh, to listen to but one Word of His! If He will but whisper, "You are Mine," it will lift our heart up almost to Heaven, itself, and fill it with a foretaste of the bliss of Glory! I know that it is so with you, Beloved. In proportion as you trust Him and love Him, will be the heartiness with which you will welcome Him when He comes to you!

In closing my discourse, let me say that if we are prepared to thus welcome Christ, He is sure to come to us. There never was a man yet who stood waiting to welcome Jesus, but Jesus was already on the way to Him. Shall I tell you how you may sooner bring Him to you than by any other means in all the world? Expose your wounds and sores before

Him! Unveil your poverty and wretchedness before Him and challenge His promise to heal and save just such sinners as you are! Never try, in order to attract Christ to you, to make yourself appear better than you are—that is poor policy and is sure to fail. If I were a wounded soldier on the battlefield, I think that I would try to appear quite as bad as I really was, so that the surgeon might attend to me at once. Certainly, it would be very foolish for a man who is sick, well-near unto death, to say to the doctor, "Leave me alone for a while; I can wait a little longer." No, rather let him cry, "O Sir, I must be attended to at once, or I fear that it may be too late! I am so ill that unless I am speedily cared for, death will claim me for its own."

Well, now, act in this fashion with regard to Christ. Go to Him, poor Sinner! Tell Him how bad you have been—you cannot aggravate or exaggerate your sin! Just lay it all open before Him and say, "My Lord, my sins are the mouths that shall plead with Your love. My misery is the eloquence that shall entreat Your mercy. I die if You do not, in pity, look upon me and forgive me. I have no other hope but in Yourself. I cast myself upon You. Lost or saved, I will trust in You. At the foot of the Cross I will perish, if I must perish anywhere." Ring the bells of Heaven, for that soul is saved! Glory to God in the highest! On earth there is peace between that soul and its Maker, for it is trusting in the Redeemer, and none ever perish who trust in Him! The Lord thus bless you, dear Friends, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 8:26-56.

Verses 26, 27. *And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He went forth to land, there met Him out of the city a certain man which had devils for a long time, and wore no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.* To what a frightful state of wretchedness this poor creature was reduced by Satanic power! Yet he is only a picture of the state of mind into which many are brought through sin. They seem as if they could not live with their fellow men. They have grown so mad through sin, so utterly beyond restraint, that they can scarcely be endured in ordinary society. Yet, as Christ healed this man, so He is equal to the cure of the worst case of spiritual and moral disease that may be brought before Him!

28. *When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with You, Jesus, you Son of God most high? I beseech you, torment me not.* See, the devil can make men pray against themselves, and this is what they do in common profane swearing when they imprecate all manner of curses upon their eyes and limbs. Ah, me! To what mischief and folly and misery can Satan drive his willing dupes!

29. *(For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he broke the bonds, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness).* Such cases have we often seen—young men who have been rescued from a course of vice and who have been, for a season, helped

towards virtue—but they have broken loose again. There was no holding them in. They had not learned self-restraint and no one else could restrain them

30, 31. *And Jesus asked him, saying, What is your name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. And they besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the deep.* So, you see, dear Friends, that devils can pray! "They besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the deep." That is, to their place of torment in Hell. They would sooner go to the bottom of the sea than go to their own dreadful home and, if we are half as wise as devils are, we shall dread beyond all things to be driven there. May God grant that no soul among us may ever lift up his eyes in torment and find himself in that awful deep!

32, 33. *And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought Him that He would allow them to enter into them. And He allowed them. Then went the devils out of the man and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were drowned.* Our proverb says, "They run hard whom the devil drives." And when once he begins to drive men or swine, there is no end to their running till they are drowned in the deep! Woe unto that man, then, who yields himself up to the tyrant master! Oh, seek the Grace that will enable you to fling him off, to never to come under his dread sway again! Better still, pray the blessed Prince of Peace to cast out the black prince of Hell and Himself to rule over your spirit, soul and body!

34. *When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled and went and told it in the city and in the country.* Sometimes Christ worked cures which were scarcely mentioned. But here—and I only remember a second miracle at all like it—that of the withering of the barren fig tree—He worked a miracle of *judgment* and it caused a great stir and much talk. I have heard of bells at sea that only ring out in the roughest storms. Here is one that was heard when softer tones would not have been heeded—"They fled and went and told it in the city and in the country."

35. *Then they went out to see what was done and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.* There was some clothing work done that day. I know not who provided the garments, but here was some real practical Christianity exhibited—not only by the Master in healing the demoniac—but by the friends who found clothing for this poor man. You do well, my Sisters, who set yourselves to help to clothe the poor. God grant that all of them may not only be clothed, but also be led to sit at the feet of Jesus!

36, 37. *They also which saw it, told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought Him to depart from them.* Surely, this legion of demons must have had the same effect on them as on the poor man when Christ first came to him! These foolish people took up the same cry as the poor demoniac! "The whole multitude besought Him to depart from them." Christ sometimes hears this kind of prayer. There is many a man who has entreated that his conscience might not be

troubled any more and it never has been troubled again. But what an awful prayer for any people to pray! "The whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought Him to depart from them."

37-39. *For they were taken with great fear: and He went up into the ship, and returned back again. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought Him that he might be with Him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to your own house, and show what great things God has done unto you. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done unto him.* Sometimes, it is better to be spreading the good news of the Gospel than to be sitting at Jesus' feet. It is best when we can do both, but, sometimes, the practical duty of serving our fellow men must take the first place. Happy are they who give themselves to this work, telling to others what God has done for them!

40-46. *And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received Him: for they were all waiting for Him. And, behold, there came a man named Jarius, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought Him that He would come into his house: for he had only one daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay dying. But as He went the people thronged Him. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind Him and touched the hem of His garment: and immediately her issue of blood stopped. And Jesus said, Who touched Me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng You and press You, and You say, Who touched Me? And Jesus said, Somebody has touched Me; for I perceive that power is gone out of Me.* Here are we, tonight, dear Friends, a great crowd. And what multitudes of professed worshippers of God there are in many places! They seem to throng the Savior, but, ah, how few do really touch Him so as to derive healing power from Him! This humble, simple touch of faith is something above and beyond all the pressure of professed zeal and ardor! This touch Christ recognizes at once, but all the pressing and the squeezing of the crowd goes for nothing.

47. *And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately.* Here is a second confessor. First, there was a man healed. Now, here is a woman healed. Both sexes may now hear from them what Christ can do. If they will not believe, oh, then their unbelief is sad, indeed!

48, 49. *And He said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole; go in peace. While He yet spoke, there came one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Your daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.* As if such a suppliant really did trouble Him! Still, if you have been praying long and your case appears to be hopeless, Despair will whisper, "Trouble not the Master." But Christ is never troubled by our prayers! It is our *lack* of prayer that troubles Him. Even after the worst has come to the worst, we shall never trouble Him if

we continue our prayers. But if, on any account, we cease from them, then, indeed, is His heart grieved.

50. *But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, Fear not: only believe, and she shall be made whole.* "If she is actually dead, she shall be raised to life again."

51. *And when He came into the house, He suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.* For Christ does not make a parade of His miracles! He loves to do His work quietly and they that make a great noise must mind that they do not get put out when Christ is about to work a cure.

52-55. *And all wept, and bewailed her: but He said, Weep not, she is not dead, but sleeps. And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and He commanded to give her meat.* Young saints need feeding as soon as they are converted. The conversion may be by miracle, but they will need to be fed by ordinary means. Be ready, dear people of God, with your milk for those who are but newly born! "He commanded to give her meat."

56. *And her parents were astonished. But He charged them that they should tell no man what was done.* For Jesus did not wish, at least at that time, to have the story of His miracles blazed abroad. Of Him the Prophet had long before written, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 792, 766, 646.

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

"THE OFFENSE OF THE CROSS"
NO. 2594

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 30, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING IN THE YEAR 1856.

"And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then is the offense of the Cross ceased."
Galatians 5:11.

THE religion of Jesus is the most peaceful, mild and benevolent religion which was ever promulgated. When we compare it with any set of dogmas invented by men, there is not one of them that can stand the least comparison with it for gentleness, mildness and love. As for the religion of Mohamed, it is the religion of the vulture—but the religion of Jesus is that of the dove—all is mercy, all is mild. It is, like its Founder, an embodiment of pure benevolence, Grace and truth.

And yet, strange to say, gentle as the Gospel is, and inoffensive as its professors have always proved themselves to be, when they have acted rightly—not resisting evil, but submitting to it, whatever it might be—yet there has never been anything which has caused more disturbance in the world than the Christian religion! It is not a sword and yet it has brought war into the world. It is not a fire and yet it has consumed many old institutions—and has burned much that men thought would last forever. It is the Gospel of peace and yet it has parted the dearest friends and caused terrible feuds and confusions everywhere! Though in itself it is all gentleness, yet it seems as if the standard of the dove were the standard of battle and as if raising up the peaceful Cross had been the signal for war, like the blood-red fiery Cross which of old they passed through Scotland to summon the clans to battle! Strange, yet strangely true it is, that the Cross of Christ has always been an offense and that it has provoked the fiercest battles and the sternest strifes which men have ever had with their fellow men.

In considering our text I shall, first, speak to you a little concerning *what "the offense of the Cross" is.* Secondly, as to *how men show their offense against the Cross.* Thirdly, I shall have a little to say to *those who are offended at the Cross,* to show them their folly. And, lastly, I shall conclude *by an inference or two, for the special benefit of Christian ministers and the Church at large.*

I. Let us enquire, first, WHEREIN DOES "THE OFFENSE OF THE CROSS" CONSIST?

Our limits forbid any attempt to be elaborate and we commence by saying that "the offense of the Cross" lies, *first, in the way in which it*

deals with all human wisdom. The philosopher puts his glasses to his eyes, looks at the Cross and then says, "I cannot see anything so very wonderful in it—even with these splendid glasses of mine, which can see more than that poor, humble peasant! I do not care about such a system of religion as that—any simpleton can understand the Cross." So he passes by and merely sneers at it.

The man who loves controversy comes to the Gospel and finds that there is in it pure dogmatism. Such things are said to be true and sinners must believe them—or else be damned. "I shall not do so" he says. "I shall not yield implicit faith to the Gospel. I like disputing upon points of doctrine. I like to argue against them. I shall not listen to your preacher who says, 'This is the Truth of God, the whole Truth of God and nothing else but the Truth.' I will not hear the man who speaks thus authoritatively! I like men who will give me margin enough to doubt, who let me believe what I like and no more. I prefer to use my reason and common sense." When you come to talk with him about the religion which says, "Believe that or else be lost. Believe that or else be shut out of the pale of salvation," he turns on his heels and says, "I will not believe any such thing!" And when he asks what it is he is to believe, he professes himself to be wiser than the Word of God! "What?" he says, "believe in the Atonement? I can't—it is contrary to my common sense. Believe the Doctrine of Election? Why, it shocks my humanity! Believe in the total depravity of human nature and the impossibility of being saved without being born again? Why, I cannot receive such teaching for a single moment! It is contrary to all that the scholars have ever taught and different from what any philosopher ever would have invented! So I shall not receive it."

And he turns away with an anathema against the Cross. He cannot bear it because of its great simplicity! If he could describe it as being so amazing that he could by no means make the common people comprehend it—and that it was only because of his gigantic intellect that he was able to understand it, himself—he would not mind accepting it! But as it is so plain and simple, he turns away from it in disgust. He cannot bear the Gospel of the Cross—it has not worldly wisdom enough in it for him—and he either does not know or he forgets that the knowledge of Christ Crucified is the most excellent of all the sciences, and that never is reason so glorified as when it humbly sits down under the shadow of the Cross!

But there is something in the Cross of Christ which hurts men's pride even more than this! And that is, *it is opposed to all their notions of human ability.* The man who is relying for salvation on his own strength does not like the Doctrine of the Cross. If anyone preaches a gospel which tells the sinner that he has power to save himself—if he preaches a gospel which says that Christ, having died to put all men in a salvable condition, they have only to exercise the power they have and they will be able to deliver themselves—if a man thus preaches something which exalts the skill and strength of the *creature*—he will never offend his unregenerate hearers! But if he once begins to cast the sinner down in the dust and to teach what Christ Himself taught—"No man can come to Me

except the Father which has sent Me draw him"—and that, in the Scriptures, all men are declared to be "dead in trespasses and sins," then the proud sinner will turn away and say, "I am not going to be so insulted, to have all my powers leveled to the ground! Am I to be made into a mere machine, or into a piece of clay and to lie passive in the Potter's hands? I will not submit to such an indignity!" If the minister will give him a little to do, himself, and let him sacrifice a little to his own idol, he will drink down the false doctrine as the ox drinks down water! But since we tell him he is powerless, like the poor bleeding man when the Samaritan met him, he says, "I will have nothing to do with you!"

And the Cross offends men, yet again, because *it goes clean contrary to their ideas of human merit.* There is not a soul in all the world that, by nature, loves to be stripped of all merit. No, the last thing a man likes to part with is his righteousness. I have known poor sinners stand on Sinai's top until their knees knocked together, yet they have clung to their self-righteousness even there! I have known men stand where God's earthquakes were shaking the ground under their feet and the thunder and lightning were playing above their heads, yet they *still* held fast to their self-righteousness! It is a hard thing to get that away from men. You know how Bunyan says that when Great-Heart slew Giant Despair, the giant "had, as they say, as many lives as a cat." And I am sure that self-righteousness has many more lives than that—it is the hardest thing in the world to kill! You may cut the evil weed, self-righteousness, up, but when you think you have got to the last root of it, it will be shooting up again before you can sharpen your knife to cut it up once more! This evil thing is bred in man's nature. When you preach against it, see how men will roar at you—they cannot bear that teaching!

I sometimes receive letters from persons who say, "We would not be surprised if all your congregation were to live in sin because you are always preaching against man's righteousness and inviting poor sinners to come to Christ by simple faith—and to be saved by Grace, alone." I daresay they would not be surprised if such a thing were to happen, but I would be surprised if my people, as a whole, lived in sin! I bless God that I have no cause to wonder about that matter, for a holier people you will not find this side of Heaven than those who receive into their hearts the Doctrine of Christ's Imputed Righteousness. This I will say of them, that Grace has worked good fruits in them, that they walk in the fear of the Lord, in love to one another and in the practice of uprightness and godliness. But men of the world cannot stand this teaching because it makes nothing of the merits of which they think so much! Tell men that they are a very good sort of folk—they love to hear that! Give people a good compliment of themselves and they will like to listen to you—but that self-conceit is the ruin of tens of thousands! I am sure it is only when we begin to say—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All"

—that we are saved. But as long as we are content with ourselves in our natural sinful condition, there is not the slightest hope for us. So, you

see, this is "the offense of the Cross," that we do not let men trust in their own merits!

But there is another offense which is a very grievous one and the world has never forgiven the Cross that "offense" yet—*it will not recognize any distinctions between mankind.* The Cross makes moral and immoral persons go to Heaven by the same road! The Cross makes rich and poor enter Heaven by the same door! The Cross makes the philosopher and peasant walk on the same highway of holiness! The Cross procures the same crown for the poor creature with one talent that the man with 10 talents shall receive. Therefore, the wise man says, "What? Am I to be saved by the same Cross which saves a man who does not know his letters?" Your fine lady asks, "Am I to be saved in the same fashion as my servant girl?" The gentleman says, "Am I to be saved the same way as that chimney-sweep?" And he who boasts of his self-righteousness cries, "What? Am I to jostle against a harlot, to elbow a drunk on the road to Heaven? Then, I will not go to Heaven at all." Then, Sir, you will be lost! There are no two roads to Heaven—it is the same road for everyone who goes there—and therefore, the Cross has always been offensive to men of mark and might. Few kings and queens have ever bent humbly before it. Men have covered up the Cross with some fine decorations and they have said that they loved it—but it was not the Cross they cared for—it was the gaudy ornaments! If it had been the simple Cross, they would have dragged it through the streets, as Mohamed's people did with the cross at Jerusalem.

II. This brings me now to tell you, in the second place, HOW PERSONS SHOW THEIR OFFENSE AGAINST THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

In olden times they did it by burning, torturing and tormenting Christians, making them suffer all kinds of indescribable agonies. But that method did not work, so the devil now adopts other measures. He found that the more he oppressed them, like Israel in Egypt, the more they multiplied—so now he acts in another fashion. How does he do it? Not exactly by open persecution, but "the offense of the Cross" shows itself, sometimes, by *private persecution.* You do not, all of you, hear of the persecution that is going on with regard to the Lord's people. Every now and then things of this sort come to my notice, though you may not know of them. How many drunk husbands there are who persecute their wives almost incessantly because they cleave fast to God? How many a young man, how many a young woman is there who is called to suffer persecution from father and mother and sister and brother, for Christ's sake? Persecution is not over—it works slyly and comes not out openly before the world. It comes not out into Smithfield, as it did of old, though there may be many a house in the neighborhood of Smithfield that reeks with it. It comes not out in an honest garb, but watches for its prey in a covert way. It is not the lion, but the prowling jackal, though it is as wild and as ravenous as ever.

And when persecution does not display itself in positive acts, it operates by means of jeers and scoffs—by the shrug of the shoulder and, let me say, more men have been ruined by this practice than by the worse

slanders! Men who shrug their shoulders generally do a deal of mischief, though they may not know it. When, sitting at table, I have mentioned a person's name and someone has shrugged his shoulders and said, "Oh"—the man's character was half gone! If the person had anything to say against the other, why could he not say it right out and not leave us in the dark to surmise all manner of iniquities? Another man will say, "I don't wish to persecute you. You can go to Chapel as often as you like." Yet there is, on his face, the cold sneer and on his lips, the cruel jest or slander! Every idle rumor is circulated and everything that can be invented against the minister of the Gospel and against Christian people—all still showing that there is now—as there was in the days of the Apostles, an "offense of the Cross."

But I will tell you what is the favorite plan, nowadays. It is not to oppose the Cross, but *to wind round the Cross and try to get the Cross to alter its shape a little.* Men who hate the Doctrines of the Cross, say, "We, too, preach the Gospel." They alter it. They misshape it. They make it "another gospel, which is not another." Let others say, if they will, that yes and no can meet together, that fire and water can kiss each other, that Christ and Belial can be twins—the true minister of Jesus Christ cannot do that! Truth is Truth and whatever is the opposite of it cannot be truth. The Truth of God is one and that which opposes it must certainly be error and falsehood. But it is the fashion to try to blend the two things together. Look at very many of the churches—they say that they hold to the Truth of God. Look at their articles—they have all the five points of Calvinism. And if you ask the ministers whether they believe the Doctrine of Election—"Certainly," they reply. If you ask them whether they believe all the great cardinal Truths of the Gospel, they say, "Oh, yes, certainly we believe them! But we do not think they ought to be preached to the common people."

Ah, Sirs! You have a fine notion of yourselves if you do not think that "the common people" are as good as you are and that they can receive the Doctrines of Grace as well as you can! "Oh, but those doctrines are dangerous! They drive the people to Antinomianism" They say this, but when we write to them, they reply, "Oh, we are as sound as you are!" Yes, but it is one thing to be sound, and another thing to preach sound Truth! I will never believe a man to be better than what he preaches. If a man does not proclaim "the Truth of God, the whole Truth of God, and nothing but the Truth," we like him none the better, but 10 times worse because he says that he believes it! We would rather he did not believe it at all than that he should conceal his real sentiments. Such men, who hide the Truth of God, prove that they are as much offended with the Cross as if they openly tried to refute its doctrines! God send us the day when the pure, unadulterated Doctrines of the Grace of God, which is in Christ Jesus, shall be proclaimed in every church and heard in every street and received by every professed Christian!

III. Now I come, in the third place, TO SAY SOMETHING TO THOSE WHO ARE OFFENDED AT THE CROSS.

First, let me say that *it is very foolish of a man who does not believe the Gospel to oppose those who do.* If a man does not, himself, love the Gospel, he should leave alone other people who do. You have often heard the old fable of the dog in the manger, but here is something worse—here is the dog *out* of the manger—he does not even lie on the hay, and yet he barks at those that come to feed upon it! He does not love the Gospel and because others do, he hates them! Why, surely, what you do not want yourselves, you might let other people have in quietness! You need not oppose them for carrying away what you count worthless rubbish! Why should you be so offended and endeavor to make a stand against the Truth of God, since you cannot, in your present condition, get anything out of it and may burn your fingers for your pains?

Then, next, *how foolish it is to be offended at the Cross, seeing that you cannot stop its progress!* He who should place himself before Juggernaut's car to be crushed would be as wise as you who are opposing the Gospel. If it is true, remember, "The Truth of God is mighty and must prevail." Who are you to attempt to stand against it? You will be crushed, but let me tell you that when the car goes over you, the wheel will not be raised even an inch by your size! For what are you? A tiny gnat, a creeping worm which that wheel will crush to less than nothing and not leave you even a name as having been an opponent of the Gospel! There have been men who have stood up and said, "We will stop the chariot of Christ." Thousands have looked at them and have been afraid. Their trumpets have blown loud and long and some poor Christians have said, "Stand aside! Here comes a man who will stop the chariot of the Lord Jesus."

At one time, it was Tom Paine. Then it was Robert Owen. But what became of them? Did the chariot stop for them? No, it went on just as if there had never been a Tom Paine or a Robert Owen on the earth! Let all the infidels in the world assuredly know that the Gospel will win its way, whatever they may do. Poor creatures! Their efforts to oppose it are not worthy of our notice and we need not fear that they can stop the Truth of God! As well might a gnat think to quench the sun! Go, tiny insect, and do it, if you can! You will only burn your wings and die. As well might a fly think it could drink the ocean dry. Drink the ocean, if you can—more likely you will sink in it and so it will drink you! You who despise and oppose the Gospel, what can you do? It comes on "conquering and to conquer." I always think that the more enemies the Gospel has, the more it will advance. As the old warrior said, "The more enemies there are, the more there are to be killed, the more there are to be taken prisoners and the more there are to run away." Double your hosts, you opposers! Come on against us with a still mightier power! Rage yet more loudly! Slander us yet more foully! Do what you can, victory is ours, for it is predestinated! The massive column of Divine Predestination stands firm and on its top there are the eagle wings betokening victory for every Believer and for the whole Church of Christ! God's Truth must and shall conquer, therefore, do *you*, foolish creature, hope to oppose the Gospel because it

offends you? The Stone cut out without hands cannot be broken by you—but if it fall upon you, it will grind you to powder!

But another thought, and I have done with this part of my subject. O man, if you hate the Gospel, let me solemnly say to you how *doubly foolish you are to be offended with Christ, who is the only One who can save you!* As well might the drowning man be offended with the rope which is cast to him and which is the only means of his escape! As well might the dying patient be offended with the cup of medicine which is put to his lips and which, alone, can save his body from death! As well might the man whose house is burning be offended with the fireman who roughly puts the fire escape ladder against his window—as that you should be offended with Christ! Offended with Him who would snatch you as "a brand from the burning"? Offended with Him who, alone, can quench for you the fire of Hell? Offended with Him whose blood, alone, can wash you white and give you a place with Him in Glory everlasting? Offended with Him? Then you are mad, indeed! Not Bedlam, itself, can produce a maniac more foolish than you are!

Ah, you despisers, you shall wonder and *perish!* You are offended with the Gospel because it says that you have not any merit, but you have not any—then why are you offended? You are offended at the Gospel because it does not ask anything of you in order that you may be saved, yet if it did demand anything of you as a condition of your salvation, you would be lost! It is just the Gospel for you—it is made on purpose—it fits your condition! It is adapted to your case and yet you are offended with it? Oh, how can you be so foolish? Did you ever hear of a man who was offended with a coach that was carrying him because it had wheels? Why should you be offended with the Gospel chariot because it could not advance except on the wheels of Free Grace? What? You are offended with the Gospel because it lays you low? Don't you know that it is the very best place for you? The devil would have you very high if he could, but that would be only that he might ruin you!

My dear Friends, I beseech you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, think about why you are offended with the Gospel! I know it goes against your prejudices. When you first hear it, you do not love it, but, remember, it is your only hope of salvation. Are you offended with that which alone can save you? Offended with that which can put a crown on your head, a palm branch in your hand and give you bliss forever? Then, I think when you sink to Hell, you will look up to Heaven and say, "Ah, Christ! I was offended with You, but now I see that You are the only Savior. I hated Your name, of which it is written, 'At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow.' I hated that Savior who was the only Savior to redeem sinners from sin."

IV. Lastly, I am TO DRAW ONE OR TWO INFERENCES.

The first is this, *If the Cross of Christ is an offense and always was an offense, what is the reason why so many professed Christians go on so easily from January to December and never have any trouble about it?* Old John Berridge said, "If you do not preach the Gospel, you may sleep soundly enough. But if you preach it faithfully, you will hardly have a

sound place in your skin, for you will soon have enemies enough assailing you." How is it that we never hear of any slander against a great many ministers? Everything goes easily and comfortably with them. Nobody is ever offended with their preaching. People go out of their chapel doors and say, "What a nice sermon! It was just the thing for everybody, and nobody could be offended." They do not fully preach the Gospel, or they would be sure to offend some people! Suppose that somebody says to me, "Do you know that Mrs. So-and-So was fearfully offended with your last sermon?" That is no trouble to me if I know that I have preached the Truth of God! A celebrated preacher was once told that he had pleased all his hearers. "Ah," he said, "there is another sermon lost."

The most effective sermons are those which make opposers of the Gospel bite their lips and gnash their teeth. "That preaching is worth little," Rowland Hill used to say, "that cannot make the devil roar. He preaches but very little of the Truth of God who does not set the old lion roaring against him." Depend upon it, Satan does not like the Gospel any better than he did—and the world does not like the Gospel any better than it did—and if there is not, nowadays, so much persecution and hatred as there used to be, it is because men do not proclaim the plain, simple Truth of God as their forefathers did! People go to hear nice velvet-tongued preachers. They like the minister to prophesy smooth things to them! "I won't go to hear Mr. So-and-So," says one, "for he will be sure to offend me."

Now what is the reason for this? It is because he preaches the whole Gospel, the pure Truth of God! But do men imagine that we *want* to offend them? No, God knows the hard things we often say cause us more pain than they cause to our hearers. But it is a good thing when we care little for the opinion of men and when we have learned to live above the world. Once let ministers faithfully proclaim the plain, simple Gospel, and we shall soon hear the laughter, scorn and jeers. It was an ill day when the sons of God made affinity with the daughters of men. And it will be an ill day for the Church of Christ when the world speaks well of it and everybody commends it. The denomination that is most spoken against is usually the one where Christ most dwells! But the denomination that is flowing in plenty and dandled on the knees of honor is usually the most corrupt! Preach the Gospel boldly, steadfastly, steadily, strongly, out-and-out—and you will not be long without hearing something about "the offense of the Cross."

My last remark is this. O my Brothers and Sisters, *how many reasons we have to bless and extol our gracious God if the Cross of Christ is not an offense to us!* I hope many here can unite with me in saying that there is nothing in the Bible that offends us and there is nothing in the Gospel that now offends us. If there is anything you do not understand, you do not hate it—if it seems dark and mysterious, you do not reject it, but you are willing to learn all you can about it. Ah, my God, if all I have ever preached is false, I stand prepared to disown it when You shall teach me better! If all I have ever learned is a mistake and I have not learned it from You, I will not be ashamed to recant it in that hour when You shall,

Yourself, teach me and show me my error. We are not ashamed to bring ourselves wholly into the mold of Scripture, to take it just as it stands, to believe it and to receive it. And if you are in that state, mark you, you are saved, for no man can say that he accepts the Gospel wholly, loves it all, and receives it in his heart—and can yet be a stranger to it!

I have heard preachers ignorantly talk about "natural" love to the Gospel—there cannot be such a thing! I heard someone say that there was a "natural" love to Christ—it is all rubbish! Nature cannot beget a love to Christ, nor love to *any* good thing—that must come of God, for all love is from Him! There is nothing good in us by nature. Every conviction must, in some way or other, come from the Holy Spirit. Even if it is a temporary one, it must be traced to Him if it is good. Oh, let us adore, exalt and magnify the mighty Grace that has made us love the Gospel! For I am sure, with some of us, there was a time when we hated it as much as any people in all the world ever did. Old John Newton used to say, "You who are called Calvinists—though you are not merely Calvinists, but the old, legitimate successors of Christ—you ought, above all men, to be very gentle with your opponents, for, remember, according to your own principles, they cannot learn the Truth of God unless they are taught of God. And if you have been taught of God, you ought to bless His name—and if they have not, you should not be angry with them, but pray to God to give them a better education." Do not let us make any extra "offense of the Cross" by our own ill humor, but let us show our love to the Cross by loving and trying to bless those who have been offended with it.

Ah, poor Sinner, what do you say? Are you offended with the Cross? No, you are not, for it is there that you wish to lose your sins. Do you desire this moment to come to Christ? You say, "I have no offense against Christ. Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! I would come, even, to His seat." Well, if you want Christ, Christ wants you; if you desire Christ, Christ desires you! Yes, more! If you have one spark of desire after Christ, Christ has a whole burning mountain of desire after you. He loves you more than you can ever love Him! Rest assured that you are not first with God. If you are seeking Jesus, He has first sought you. Come, then, you destitute, weary, lost, helpless, ruined, chief of sinners! Come, put your trust in His blood and His perfect righteousness, and you will go on your way rejoicing in Christ, set free from sin, delivered from iniquity, rendered as safe, though not as happy, as the very angels that now sing high hosannas before the Throne of the Most High!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GALATIANS 1.

Verse 1. *Paul, an Apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead).* Paul begins this Epistle by stating his commission as an Apostle. In Galatia he had been subjected to the great sorrow of having his Apostleship called in question. Does he, therefore, give up his claim to the office and retire

from the work? No, not for a moment! He begins his letter to the Galatians by declaring himself to be "an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ." His enemies had said, "Paul was never one of the Savior's 12 Apostles. He is not like those who were trained and educated by Christ, Himself. No doubt he has borrowed his doctrine from them and he is only a retailer of other men's goods." "No, no," says Paul, "I am an Apostle as truly as any other of the twelve! 'Not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead.'"

2. *And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia.* Paul always loved to associate others with him in his Christian service. He was not one who wanted to ride the high horse and to keep himself aloof from his Brethren in Christ. He frequently mentions the true-hearted men who were with him, even though they were far inferior to him in talent and also in Grace. He often joins with himself such men as Timothy and Silvanus, and here he puts in, "all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia."

3. *Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.* It is the genius of the Gospel to wish well to others. Hence Paul begins the actual Epistle with a benediction—"Grace be to you and peace." Dear Friends, may you all have a fullness of these two good things! Grace rightly comes first and peace afterwards. Peace before Grace would be perilous—no, more, it would be ruinous! But may you always have enough of Grace to lead you on to a deep and joyful peace! The two things go together very delightfully—Grace and peace—and it is the best of Grace, and the best of peace, since they come "from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ."

4. *Who gave Himself for our sins.* There is the Doctrine of the Atonement which Paul always brings into his preaching and writing as soon as he can—"Who gave Himself for our sins." Well does Luther say, "Christ never gave Himself for our righteousness, but he gave Himself for our sins because there was no other way of saving us except by a Sacrifice for sin." The substitutionary Character of Christ's death is always to be noticed. "Who gave himself for our sins."

4, 5. *That He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.* Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself puts away our sin in order that we may rise out of it and may become a pure and holy people, delivered from this present evil world and brought into obedience to the will of God. Now we come to quite another topic.

6. *I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the Grace of Christ, unto another Gospel.* The Galatians were a very fickle people. Some have said that they were a colony from Gaul—Galatians—and that they partook somewhat of the fickleness which is attributed to the character of the Gaul. I know not how true that may be, but, certainly, they seem very soon to have left the Gospel—to have adulterated it and to have fallen into Ritualism—into Sacramentarianism, into salva-

tion by works, and all the errors into which people usually fall when they go away from the Gospel.

7. *Which is not another. But there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ.* "Another Gospel, which is not another," for there are not two gospels, any more than there are two gods. There is one only message from God, of good news to men, and if you turn away from that, you turn away to a lie, to that which will bring you trouble, to that which will pervert you and lead you astray!

8. *But though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.* Paul is no fanatic, no raving enthusiast, yet he cannot endure the notion of a false Gospel! In his solemn anathema, he includes himself and all the Brothers with him, yes, and the very angels of God if they "preach any other Gospel." Let him be accursed, he says, and so he is.

9. *As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed.* The modern style of speaking is, "Let us fraternize with him. He is a man of original thought. Surely, you would not bind all men down to one mode of speech. Perhaps if he has made mistakes, you will bring him round to your way of thinking by receiving him kindly into your fellowship." "No, no," says Paul, "As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed."

10. *For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.* He would not be the servant of Christ if he pleased men. Those whom we try to please are our masters! If a man tries to please the populace, or to please the refined few, those are his masters and he will be their slave. But if he tries to please his God, then is he a free man, indeed!

11, 12. *But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.* Paul foresaw what would be said about him later and truly, to this day, the fiercest attack upon Christianity is always made upon the teaching of the Apostle Paul. The men who creep in unawares among us talk glibly about having great reverence for Christ, but none for Paul. Yet Paul is Christ's Apostle! Paul speaks only what was personally revealed to Him by the Lord, Himself, and he is, in everything, to be accepted as speaking by Divine Revelation.

13, 14. *For you have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure, I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.* He was an out-and-out Jew. He never took up anything without going through with it thoroughly. So, while he believed in Judaism, he really did believe it. He was no hypocrite, no pretender—he fought for it tooth and nail! This was the man who afterwards preached the Christianity he had received from Christ! Evidently he did not borrow it from his parents, for they had taught him quite differently. His religion was not

the product of his training, but it came to him from God—to him who seemed to be the most unlikely person in the whole land to ever receive it!

15, 16. *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His Grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.* He felt Divinely called to preach the Gospel. Christ revealed Himself to him on the way to Damascus. As soon as he was converted, he did not wait for anybody to ordain him, or to teach him further, but he says, "I conferred not with flesh and blood."

17. *Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were Apostles before me, but went into Arabia.* What he did there, we do not know, but probably he had a time of quiet meditation and prayer, all alone. "I went into Arabia." The best thing we can do, sometimes, is to get away from the voices of men and listen only to the voice of God. "I went into Arabia."

17. *And returned again unto Damascus.* To bear witness for Christ in the very city where he had gone to persecute the saints!

18. *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.* That is, "after three years," which showed that he did not go there to receive any commission from Peter. He had been, for three years, working for his Lord and Master before he ever saw the face of an Apostle!

19. *But other of the Apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.* He had an interview with the Apostle James. James was probably the chief minister of the Church at Jerusalem, so Paul went and had a conversation with him.

20. *Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.* "I did not derive my knowledge of Christ from any one of these holy men, therefore I am not an imitator of any other Apostle. I was sent out by Christ, Himself, and instructed by Him by Revelation, so I am an Apostle of Christ as much as any of them."

21, 22. *Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia and was unknown by face unto the Churches of Judea which were in Christ.* They did not know him. It is evident that he had not been there to be taught by them, or else they would have recognized their illustrious pupil.

23, 24. *But they had heard only that he which persecuted us in times past now preaches the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.* Brothers and Sisters, may you and I so live that Christian people may glorify God in us! May they often wonder at the mighty Grace which has worked such a change in us! And as they see us zealous and fervent, may they marvel at the amazing Grace of God which has brought us to be so consecrated to Christ!

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

WHAT THE LORD'S SUPPER SEES AND SAYS
NO. 2595

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 1, 1883.

"For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup,
you do show the Lord's death till He comes."
1 Corinthians 11:26.

THERE is something very tender about the Supper which Christ has instituted, for it very specially concerns Himself. Other things set forth the Truths of God which He taught, or the blessings which He purchased, or the duties which He enjoined, but this Supper has mainly to do with our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself. True, as we think and speak of it, we shall learn precious doctrine and we shall be incited to gracious practice, but the central thought at this Table is concerning our Lord, Himself, and that part of Himself which it is most easy for us to realize—His flesh, with which He touches us so tenderly, making Himself bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. His blood, which makes Him so near akin to us—

"In ties of blood with sinners one."

It is very blessed not only to be reminded of Christ, but of that part of Christ to which we can most readily come. His Godhead is beyond us, but His Manhood is near to us, and I think that the tenderness of this Supper is greatly increased by the fact that it celebrates our Lord's death. If anything concerning our departed friends specially touches our heart, it is their death. How lovingly we remember their last moments! Their final utterance sounds to us like the language of Prophets—words that were commonplace, before, become golden when spoken to us by loved ones as they leave us. The tears come readily enough to the eyes and the heart beats faster than usual when we begin to remember our well-beloved friends—and to remember them in the solemn moment of their death. At this Supper we shall not forget that our blessed Master is exalted and sits at the right hand of God. And we shall also, there, be forcibly reminded that He is coming a second time in the clouds of Heaven with all the pomp and glory of His Father's court! Yet, the main intent of our gathering around this Table is to show forth His death. That is the principal point and, therefore, Beloved, collect all your thoughts into one thought, all your contemplations into one contemplation and lay the whole at the foot of the Cross as you "eat this bread, and drink this cup."

To me, it is an exceedingly tender recollection that you and I should be called upon to keep up this memorial as if our Lord gave us this Supper with the commission that each one of us should see to it that His mem-

ory was always green—I was about to say, to keep His grave in order. But it is not so, He is not here, for He is risen! But, at least we are to keep the letters upon this monument always deeply carved and legible, showing forth His death that everyone who passes by—that everyone who rambles into the cemetery where men have slept and pauses at this open tomb, and asks who once slept here—may know from us that it was Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God and the Son of Man, our dear and ever-to-be-adored Savior, who died, was buried and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures!

You see, then, that this Supper concerns our Lord Jesus and it especially concerns His death. And you have to attend to this ordinance and so to freshen up the memorials of the departed One. Do you not think that it will help you to do it if you remember that He has not gone far away? Before I rose to speak to you, I thought within myself that I could hear His footsteps upon this platform—and I opened my eyes after my Brother's prayer almost expecting to see the Master here! He is not here in that sense, though, if I said that He is here, who would dare to contradict me? He has so gone away as to be still present and He is still present so as to be absent! Make what you can of that riddle—many of you understand the blessed paradox! We have not lost our Lord's spiritual Presence, but we are looking for His bodily Presence and, I think, He is already so near that if He were suddenly to appear in our midst, it would be no surprise to us and we would all clap our hands, and say, "Welcome, You long-expected One! We knew that You would come and we felt the influence of Your Presence—the coming event had cast its brightness upon us! We knew that You were on the way, for our hearts burned within us and we felt You coming nearer and the days of Your Glory dawning!"

Very well, then, bearing all this in mind, we have now to consider what the Apostle said about this Supper and, first, I shall ask you to think of *the backward look of this ordinance*—"You do show the Lord's death." Secondly, I shall ask you to listen to *the present voice of this ordinance,* to try to hear what it now whispers in our ears. And then, thirdly, I shall speak of *the prophetic glance of this ordinance,* since the text tells us that in it we "do show the Lord's death till He comes." So there is, in the ordinance, a glimpse at Christ's coming Glory, a gleam of that long-expected light!

I. First, then, let us think of THE BACKWARD LOOK OF THIS ORDINANCE.

It was intended to be the memorial of the great event of Christ's life—and I think you will all agree with me that it is *a most effectual memorial.* It has been said, by men well competent to judge, that there is no better memorial of an event than the celebration of some such festival as this. If you write the record of it in a book, the book may be placed upon a shelf and, perhaps, remain unread. Or it may be completely destroyed so that not a copy of it remains. If you set up a stone or bronze pillar and engrave upon it some words by way of memorial, that pillar may be turned to some other use and the original intention of its erection may be wholly forgotten. I have seen marble columns, recording Roman triumphs, built

into the houses of Italian peasants—and you may have seen the same. Painted windows are broken and even solid brass wears away. How can you keep a thing upon the tablets of man's memory? Here is a nine days' wonder—will it last for nine centuries even in old worm-eaten books, or engrossed on parchment? Will not the Record Office be invaded by rats? Has it not often happened so and the best preserved documents have perished? But institute a Supper like this, so that wherever the followers of Christ meet together, a piece of bread and a little wine may suffice them to show forth Christ's death and you have instituted a memorial which will outlast your granite and laugh to scorn memorials of brass! Speak of imperishable marble? Here you have something far more enduring and now, for nearly 19 centuries has the Church of God kept alive the memory of Christ's death by this sacred feast. In the wisdom of Christ it was given to us—let us not grow so wise , or rather so foolish — as to neglect it!

In looking back from this ordinance, we see it to be not only a most effectual memorial, but also *a most instructive symbol.* Of what does this Supper consist? Simply of bread and wine. The bread must be broken and what better emblem of suffering can you have than that? The bread, itself, if rightly viewed, appears to be a mass of suffering. The seed is cast into the ground which has been cut up by the sharp plow. It lies buried for a while in the cold soil. When it rises, it has to endure, first, the frost and all the trials of the wintry weather, and then the heat of summer. And when it ripens, it is cut down with a sharp sickle. The sheaves press upon one another—they are thrown upon the barn floor and the precious grain is threshed out by severe beating. Next, it must be taken to the mill, to be crushed between great stones. And when it is utterly bruised into fine flour, it must be kneaded and made into dough. Then it must be baked in the oven and it has not finished its long process of suffering till, at last, it is laid upon the table and broken in pieces, and then further broken with the teeth in order to enter into men and become their nourishment. So you see that the broken bread is an admirable emblem of that precious body of our Lord Jesus Christ into which all sorts of griefs were condensed till the "Man of Sorrows" was utterly consumed by them.

And look, too, at the wine in the cup. Does not that also indicate pain and suffering? Have you ever seen the vine—especially in the wine-producing countries—how it is cut down, till, in the winter, it seems to be nothing but an old dead stump? How sharply do they prune it and cut it back if it is a good vine! And when, at last, it bears its clusters, the grapes are gathered and thrown into the winepress and crushed beneath the trampling feet of the laborers. And the freely-flowing juice of the grape is the picture of Christ's Sacrifice—the yielding up of His life—the pouring out of the precious blood of Jesus!

Now take the two emblems separately. You cannot make the Lord's Supper with the two joined together. You must have them both, but you must have them apart, for, when the blood is separated from the flesh, then death ensues. So, on the Table, you have not only two tokens of intense suffering, but you have in the two, separate from each other, a most marked and instructive symbol of death. This is just what the Lord

intended that it should be. And when we come here, we can hardly keep from remembering His death, for it is so clearly set forth before us! I do not know what the Roman "mass" sets forth, with all its mummery and mockery—what that can have to do with Christ, I cannot tell! But here you have, as Christ instituted the ordinance, a fair token and symbol of His broken body and of His shed blood and, therefore, of His death.

You also have, in this Supper, something more than this, and that is, *a most pleasing and happy exhibition of the result of that death.* Our Divine Master died. "Woe, woe," we cry, "that Heaven's Darling should lie dead in the tomb!" Yes, but look what comes out of His death! Men are now called to feast with God! Our Lord Jesus, by His death, has provided this sacred viand upon which hungry souls may feed to the fullest and they are invited to come and take of that which is provided—the good cheer of Heaven, the bread that strengthens man's heart and that wine which safely makes glad his spirit. Yes, man is no longer an outcast. No longer does he wish for the swine's husks to fill his belly, even if they cannot satisfy it, but he sits at the Table and a feast of fat things is prepared for him—necessities and dainties—bread and wine provided for him in Christ! And that is plainly set forth to all who care to see it in this Supper. Nor is this all.

There is, in this supper, *a personal and yet united confession and testimony to Christ.* It might have seemed difficult to blend these two, for religion is a personal matter. If Christ is to save me, I must personally feed upon Him, and yet, religion is also a social matter. If Christ is to save me, it must be in connection with the whole of His Church which He has redeemed with His most precious blood. Now here, at the Table, eating is an individual act—no man can eat or drink for his fellow men and thus, each man sets forth that he does, from his own heart, of his own accord, by his own faith, receive Christ to be his Savior. Yet inasmuch as no one man, alone, can celebrate the Lord's Supper, but there must be two or three at the least, so the great fact is set forth that we are not saved alone, but saved as members of one body—the Church of God which He has redeemed at so great a cost!

See, then, how the unit is lost in the mass. No, not lost—it is still there and yet it is no longer separate—and this Supper sets forth all that. Come, therefore, Beloved, to this ordinance which has such richness of meaning in it that the few words I have spoken do but touch the surface of the subject! Come, I say, and think of your Beloved. He has died—He has died for you! That dear body of His, black and blue with the cruel stripes, and crimson with its own blood—that life poured forth, though it was for all His people, yet was especially for you, my Brother—for you, my Sister! You did not see Christ die, but if your faith is in a right condition, you may see Him die, as it were, emblematically. You may see His death vividly set forth, after a striking fashion, in those emblems on the Table. God give you Grace to see it and, in response, to love Him more who died on Calvary for you! Oh, if you had seen Him die, the horror of that scene would have overcome you and, instead of sweet thoughts of devotion, as you fancy might be the case, you would probably have been overwhelmed with terror!

But now, as through a glass, in the emblems of the body and the blood of Christ, you may see Him under a softer light. The horror may not oppress you, but you may sit in that pew and see Him who died for you—see Him with a holy joy that He could have loved you and given Himself for you! It is you who are to think of Him. It is you who are to discern the Lord's body. It is you who are to eat and drink worthily, with all your heart, setting forth Christ's death. It is you who are to represent Him—you, with all your Brothers and Sisters, but you, none the less, as truly as if you were alone. "As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death"

That is the backward look of this ordinance—may God's Spirit enable you to give that look at this moment!

II. And now, dear Friends, secondly and briefly, bow your ear a little and listen to THE PRESENT VOICE OF THIS ORDINANCE TO YOU. What does it say at this hour?

It says to me—and my heart shall hear it—that *Christ's death must still be kept to the front.* I am to "show the Lord's death till He comes." Whatever I forget, I am to remember that. And this Supper is instituted on purpose that I may do so. O my Heart, you must keep a dying Christ always before you! Christ to the front for myself! Christ to the front in my teaching! Christ to the front in all my prayers! Christ to the front everywhere! O Memory, leave no other name but His recorded on my heart! Whatever else may come or may go, my Heart, you are told that you must still remember His death and keep it right in the forefront of everything!

But over the table I hear a whisper come, *"You still need this memorial."* We are not only to remember Christ, we are to, "do this," in remembrance of Him. This ordinance is intended to help our memory. Is it possible that we can forget our Lord's death? Ah, if it had not been possible and *probable*, that we should forget it, there would have been no need of this Supper! It is ordained because we are naturally forgetful, we are ungracious enough to let even the best things slip. We forget not our earthly beloved ones who have been taken from us—the dear infant child has its name inscribed on the tablets of its mother's heart, the husband has not forgotten his wife—but yet we grow unmindful of our Lord, and hence He left us this sweet forget-me-not. He says to us, as it were, "No, My beloved, I will not let you forget Me. I will give you something that shall frequently remind you of Me. Come often to My Table and there constantly think of Me afresh and anew."

What else does this ordinance say? It says, *"In this Supper I have fellowship with the centuries that have gone before and with those which will follow."* When our Lord said to His first disciples, "This do in remembrance of Me," He really gave that command to each one of us who believe in Him. But He also gave it to all the saints who have gone before us and to all who will come after us. Does it not charm you to think that you are eating as Paul did, and as James and John did—that you are in the fellowship of the martyrs and confessors, the Fathers and the Reformers, and that we, in this ordinance, enter into the great cloud of *witnesses* and take our part with them? I look upon this Supper—which some seem to regard as an unimportant ceremony—as a thing most au-

gust and sacred, seeing how many hands have combined to break this bread and how many lips have partaken of this cup. So will it be in the future when you and I sleep with our fathers. If Christ shall not come for a long, long while, this ordinance will still be observed by the faithful. If His coming should be delayed for 10,000 years—which God forbid! —yet still this Supper table would be spread and loving hearts would gather around it to keep this memorial alive on the earth "till He comes." Do you see what this communion really is? It is a bridge of diamonds! It springs from our Lord's death with one grand arch and it spans the intervening space "till He comes." Blessed are they that are treading that glorious bridge and marching on, washed in the blood of His death, till they shall wear the white robes of His victory in the day of His appearing!

I think I hear another voice coming out of the depth of the cup. It says, *"He will come. He will come."* And, oh, blessed assurance, He must keep His promise! This Supper is His pledge and it would be a cruel mockery of us if He never came. He *must* come! My Brothers and Sisters, it is nearly 19 centuries since Jesus said to His disciples, "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. 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." And He will come! Do not grow weary or, if you do faint with the long watching and waiting, do not grow doubtful. He will come! Your fathers thought that He would come in their time. Some of them fancied themselves very wise and tried to interpret the prophecies which never will be explained until they are fulfilled—and they lost themselves in endless mazes of conjecture. Do not so, but, still, do not fling away your faith because you cast aside your speculation! Believe and hope, and patiently wait, and look, each day, for the returning Christ, for He may come before tomorrow's clock strikes at noon! He may come before the midnight hour shall fall upon the hush of this great city. Before the word I am speaking shall leave these lips and reach your ears, He may appear, for, "of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not the angels which are in Heaven." But it is ours to stand watching, waiting and hoping, for this Supper tells us that He will surely come again!

One more message comes to me from this broken bread and that is, that *it is His first coming that makes us ready for the second.* Is it not so? "You do show the Lord's death till He comes." You keep before your mind's eye the fact that He came once to die in order that you may feel joy in the fact that He is coming again, not to die, but to reign forever and ever! I think I hear the countless trumpets and see the dead rising, and behold the King attended by ten thousand times ten thousand kings! Kings, did I call them? They seem to me like stars! No, like suns, for "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." Their Lord has come and His saints are gathered around Him. Caught up into the clouds, the living ones are with Him and the dead have risen and joined them! Oh, the splendor of that tremendous day! Though we know not when that day shall be, we know that He will come—the angels gave the promise to the men of Galilee—and it shall be fulfilled. "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." In the clouds of Heaven, with great pomp, will He appear and, as we come to this Communion Table, we must think of that glorious appearing of our Lord!

III. Now, lastly, I have to speak about THE PROPHETIC GLANCE OF THIS ORDINANCE. I have partly referred to that, already, for one thought in our text blends with another.

The prophetic glance reveals to us the fact that *Christ will come again.* We are to celebrate this Supper "till He comes." Then, He *will* come! Fall not asleep, you virgins, for at midnight the cry shall be heard, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes." O you who serve Him, begin not to mistreat your fellow servants and to be drunk, for He will come and He may soon be here! By this Supper are we assured that He will come. "But," perhaps you say, "His saints have waited for Him nearly 2,000 years." What is that? Two thousand years? Think of those who waited 4,000 years before Christ came here to die! Now, I reckon that to wait 2,000 years for our Lord's Second Advent is a trifle compared with waiting 4,000 years for His First Advent, for, you see, on that first coming depended the salvation of all His people! The ancients might well ask, "Will He come to die?" O my Brothers and Sisters, if Abraham and the Patriarchs and the Prophets had been dubious about His coming to bleed and die, I should not so much have wondered! Four thousand years passed and yet He had not come—might not each man have put his hands upon his loins for fear that he would not come—that there would be no redemption—no pouring out of the great price by which men should be set free? Four thousand years to wait for that! Why, now, if we have to wait 40,000 years for His Second Advent, it need not be such an anxious time of waiting because we may expect Him to come in His Glory—we may expect Him to come to be admired in all them that believe! We may expect Him to come to reign forever and ever! We may be sure that He who slew the dragon will come to divide the spoil! He that routed Death and Hell will come to lead captivity captive and to reign forever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords! You are not waiting in the night, for the Day-Star has risen. You are not waiting in the thick darkness—the Dawn has broken upon you. Christ has appeared once! You are redeemed by His blood, you are children of the living God! Patiently wait, then, for He will most surely come, and every hour brings Him nearer.

What does this ordinance further say to me? Why, surely, that *Christ's coming will be better than ordinances.* If, when He comes, there will be no more Lord's Suppers as we observe them now, and if it is, as it certainly is, a rule of the Kingdom to always go from good to better—and from better to best, as God never brings forth the best wine, first, and afterwards that which is worse, but it is always something better, and better, and better—then what must Christ's coming be? Brothers and Sisters, communion with Christ in the ordinances is very, very sweet! Oh, sometimes, we have had such pleasure, such delight, such rapture at the Table of our Lord, that we could hardly have endured any more!

At such times I have sympathized, a little, with Peter when he wished to build three tabernacles and to remain on the Mount of Transfigura-

tion! It is very easy to get up to a great height, but, alas, we soon get down again. I wish that we could always do, in spiritual things, what I have done, today, by God's Grace, in temporal things. I am so lame and it was so great a pain for me to get up here, this morning, that I said, "God willing, if I once get up to my platform and preach, I will not go down, again, till I have preached the evening sermon." So I have remained upstairs all day. When I was once up, I stayed up! Now mind you, do that in spiritual things! You know, if you go down, you lame folk, you may not be able to get up, again, so stay up when you are up, and try to continue enjoying the Presence of your Lord and Master.

But, if Lord's Suppers and communion with Christ in outward ordinances are so sweet and we are to go on to something even better when the Lord, Himself, comes, then what excessive delight it will be! Oh, to catch a glimpse of Him! If the feet of His servants upon the mountains are beautiful, what must His own dear face be when He shall be down in the valleys among us? Oh, if the sound of His Gospel is as silver bells, what shall be the utterances of His own dear lips when His words shall be as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh? Ah, me, there is something coming for you, Believer, of which you know but little as yet! Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into your heart to know them—yet God has revealed them to you by His Spirit. You know them, to some extent, but not wholly as yet, for here we see in part and understand only in part, but there we shall know even as we are known. Be of good comfort, Brothers and Sisters—get all the sweetness you can out of this Supper while it lasts, but do not forget that there is something better than this yet to be revealed. This ordinance is only like a candle, or a little star—when Christ comes, you will not need it, for He is the Sun!

Further, does not this Supper, as it looks into the future, tell us that *the time is coming when we shall be rid of all infirmities?* What is the need of this Supper, but that we have such weak, frail memories? When it shall be taken away, it will be a token that we have good memories—memories that will miss nothing, but will hold by that which is good and blessed forever and forever! When this Communion is no longer to be observed, it will be a happy sign that we have come to our perfection!

Here I will close, but I seem, in closing, as if I said to you, "This is a kind of preface." In my old Puritan books, I often find a preface written by some other hand to introduce the author's writing. Well, this is my preface to introduce you to this marvelous book—the Communion, the Feast of Love, the Lord's Supper. There is no teaching anywhere like it! I have been in the habit of coming to the Lord's Table every first day of the week now for many years—I have never omitted it except when I have been too ill to move. Has it lost its freshness? Oh, dear, no! It is always a standing sermon containing more teaching than volumes of men's sermons. I do not know how they get on who have the communion only once a quarter or once a year. Paul said, "As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup." He should have said, "as *seldom* as you drink it," according to the habit of some! There is no law about the frequency of its observance, except the sweet Law of Love which seems to say, "If this is a window where Christ looks out, then let me often approach it. If this is a

door through which He comes to my heart, then let me stand often at this door." "Often"—frequently—I think that at least once in the week it is well for us to come to the Table of our Lord.

But there are some of you who have never come to this Table. If you are not God's people, do not come—it would do you no good—it would rather do you harm to partake of these emblems. If you are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, do not come to His Table—you would be hypocrites or intruders. But if you are sincere believers in Christ, how can you stay away? "This do," He says, "in remembrance of Me." Suppose your Lord were to come and you had never done as He bade you? What would you say to Him? "It is such a simple matter," you say. Yes, in some senses it is. Therefore, attend to it! If it were a matter in which your soul was concerned, so that you could not be saved without it, you say that you would attend to it. Would you? What wretched selfishness that would be! Is this all that you are to live for—that you may be saved? Are you really worth saving, such a miserable creature as you are? You seem to me to be too poor a thing to be worth redeeming. If you are what you should be, you are believing in Christ and you are saved—and now you say, "What can I do to show my gratitude to Him who has redeemed me?" Your heart expands, your spirit is enlarged and if there is anything, little or great, which Christ commands as a proof of love to Him, you are delighted to do it! Do you not sometimes wish that He would give you something very difficult to do—some difficult enterprise? Have you never envied the men that died, burning at the stake, for Him? Oh, it must have been grand to have thus proved one's love to Him! But He says, "If you love Me, keep My Commandments"—and this is one of His Commandments, "This do in remembrance of Me."

Now come, dear Friends, to this Communion Table, seeking your Lord and Master, and may you find Him and your hearts be made glad! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 26:17-30; 1 CORINTHIANS 11:20-34.

Matthew 26:17-19. *Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where will You that we prepare for You to eat the Passover? And He said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover.* Note their prompt obedience—"the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them." In this respect, they set an example we shall do well to follow.

20. *Now when the even was come, He sat down with the twelve.* This was the memorable night when the Jewish Passover was to melt into the Lord's Supper, just as the stars of the morning dissolve into the daylight.

21. *And as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me.* This saying of our Lord must have startled His disciples! They had all made great professions of affection for Him and, for the most part, those professions were true. But this sentence must have fallen like a bombshell among them! "One of you shall betray Me."

22. *And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and began, every one of them, to say unto Him, Lord, is it?* They did not doubt their Lord's declaration. They knew it must be true—and it produced in them deep emotion—"They were exceedingly sorrowful." It also worked in them earnest self-examination. They did not, any one of them, say, "Lord, is it Judas?" Perhaps there was not one of them who could have thought so badly of Judas as to suppose that he would betray his Lord. They had such esteem for him that they had made him their treasurer. It is always wise for us to turn the glass of critical examination upon ourselves—we cannot do any good by suspecting our brethren. Suspicion stings like an adder, but we may do ourselves great service by suspecting and examining ourselves. Self-suspicion is near akin to humility and truthfulness—it was so with all but one of these disciples who began to say to Christ, "Lord, is it I?"

23, 24. *And He answered and said, He that dips his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born.* So, you see, dear Friends, that a man may get very near to Christ—yes, he may even dip his morsel in the same dish with his Lord, and yet he may betray Him, even as Judas did. We may be very high in office. We may apparently be very useful—I have no doubt that Judas was exceedingly useful to the 12 and to the Master—and yet, for all that, we may betray Him! God grant that we never may! Far better that we perished at our birth than that we should live to be traitors to our Lord!

25. *Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, You have said.* And if he had not been a hopeless reprobate, this unmasking of Judas ought to have driven him to repentance. A man may secretly indulge in his heart a wretched design and, when discovered, he may loathe it. But, alas, there was nothing in Judas which could respond to the Grace of God.

26-28. *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.* Go into any Romish church and watch the priest's performance at the altar, and see whether there is the least likeness between that mummery and this Divinely-appointed ordinance! I can hardly imagine two things which are so widely apart! How did the Lord's Supper ever grow into the "mass"? It must have taken long years of moss and ivy and lichen and all kinds of clinging things to overgrow the original, natural column which the Savior set up and to turn it into that mingle-mangle of which the Romanists and Ritualists think so much! The only safe rule is to keep close to Scripture in everything, for, if you add a little, somebody will add more—and if you alter one thing, the next person will alter another and, by-and-by, you will not know what the original was! I have seen a peasant, in Italy, wearing a coat of which I believe neither man nor angel could tell which was the material of which it was originally made, for it had been patched so often. And, in like

manner, if we did not know what was the original of the "mass," it would be impossible for us, now, to tell, for it has been so patched and mended that it is not at all like the original! Let us, Beloved, keep strictly to the letter of God's Word and also to the spirit of it, lest we err from the Truth of God as so many others have done.

29, 30. *But I say unto you, 1 will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.* Was it not brave of our dear Lord to join in singing a hymn at such a time as that and under such circumstances? He knew that He was very soon to die—He was going out to His last dread conflict—yet He went to it singing a Psalm! It was to His Passion that He was going—to Gethsemane's agony and bloody sweat. Yet He led the way there with a sacred song upon His lips. "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives." Now let us turn to Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, at the 11th Chapter. We shall there see how this Supper of the Lord had been changed, even in the few years since the death of the Master.

1 Corinthians 11:20, 21. *When you come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, everyone takes before others his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunk.* They seem to have brought their own provisions to the assembly and to have made a feast, thereof, and they even thought that was an observance of the Lord's Supper! They differed in social position and, consequently, one had little and another much, and some even went to excess so that they were actually "drunk." Paul might well rebuke such unseemly conduct!

22. *What? Have you not houses to eat and to drink in! Or despise you the Church of God?* "Do you think that, as a nominally Christian assembly, you are constituted merely that you may eat and drink? 'What? Have you not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise you the Church of God?'"

22. *And shame them that have not?* "Making the poor who come to the gathering feel their poverty by observing the superiority of your provisions to their own."

22, 23. *What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.* "And therefore you ought not to have gone astray. I told you how to observe this ordinance, so you have willfully erred. This is what I delivered unto you."

23-27. *That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread: and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do you, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till He comes. Therefore whoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily.* That is, from wrong motives, without sincere faith and devotion to God.

27-29. *Shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.* You notice that I introduced the word, "condemnation," instead of, "damnation." That word does not correctly give the meaning of the original—it is not damnation, but condemnation, or judgment, as is clear from that which follows.

30. *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.* There is no doubt that God visited upon the Corinthians, in the way of chastisement, their lack of reverence at His Table. Many were weak and sickly among them, and many died. They were not lost if they were believers in Christ, but the Church at Corinth sustained a great loss through their departure, and I have no doubt that God still exercises a singular discipline over His own people. They that are outside are, to a large extent, left to sin as they please. Their punishment will fall upon them hereafter—but the child of God cannot be allowed to do so and he shall be chastened for his sin. The Lord still says to His spiritual Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." A father may let another man's child alone, but his own boy shall not transgress without smarting for it! Such conduct as is here described does not bring damnation, for there is no damnation to them that are in Christ Jesus—but it does bring the chastening with which God visits His children when they walk contrary to Him.

31. *For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.* But when a Church has lost its conscience and gets into such a state as this Corinthian Church fell into, then, as it does not judge itself, God judges it and chastens it severely.

32. *But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.* Perhaps somebody thought, just now, "I do not want to be in the Church of Christ if it gets special chastening." That is one among many reasons why I *do* want to be in the Church of Christ, for, "we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

33, 34. *Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hungers, let him eat at home; that you come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 947, 356.

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

WHERE IS THE GOD OF ELIJAH?
NO. 2596

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 24, 1883.

"And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and struck the water and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that, and Elisha crossed over." 2 Kings 2:14.

THE great objective for our souls is to seek after our God. We love His House, the place where prayer is apt to be made is very dear to us. But the courts of the Lord's House are dull and dreary if the Lord, Himself, is not there! Our question is not so much, "Where are His courts?" as, "Where is Jehovah, Himself?" Brothers and Sisters, we love beyond expression the ministry of God's Word—it has been unspeakably precious to our spirits! By it we were called into spiritual life and by it our life is fed and nourished. But still, if God, Himself, is not in the Word and with the Word, what does it avail us? Our spirits must be sustained by the Holy Spirit or else they faint and die.

In reading a gracious book, or in engaging in private devotion, or in coming into the great assemblies of God's House, our chief question is, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"—for if we do not find God in all these things, what have we found? Nothing. Or we have mere husks, whereas the precious, priceless kernel is lost to us! Oh, I wish that we always felt in prayer that we would never leave off praying till we found the God of prayer! I wish that, in our singing, we would always feel that we had not truly praised God at all unless our song had found Him, and every note in it had had some one of His attributes to sing. Oh, what an effort it is, sometimes, to really get at God! We are ready to cry with the poet—

"I will approach You—I will force
My way through obstacles to You."

"I will break through gates of brass, I will leap over the highest wall, but I must get to my God, the living God! Oh, when shall I come and appear before God?" I wish that we were always in this state of mind, that our continual cry might be, "The Lord God of Elijah—we must have Him! We cannot live without Him, we cannot be strong without Him, we cannot rejoice without Him. We would not wish even to be in Heaven without Him—it would be no Heaven to us if the Lord were gone from it! "Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You."

Now, this great Truth of God, that our first and last objective should be to seek our God, is peculiarly true when we are called upon to under-

take some new office or work unknown to us. Elisha, for instance, has poured water upon the hands of Elijah and been his personal attendant. But Elijah has been taken away by a whirlwind into Heaven and, now, Elisha has to be the Prophet of Israel in Elijah's place. A great weight of responsibility has fallen upon him. He has to do what scarcely any other man of woman born had ever done before—he has to follow one who seems well-nigh inimitable! He has to be successor of the Prophet of Fire—the man of God, Elijah. "Well," you say, "he has Elijah's mantle." Yes, he has his mantle and there is something in that. If ever I could feel any great reverence for relics, I would like to have Elijah's mantle. Elisha had it, but what was the use of having the mantle of Elijah unless he could also have his God? Though he is called to take the mantle and with it to strike the waters, yet he knows where his strength must lie, and his prayer, his cry, is, "Here is the Prophet's mantle; but where is Jehovah, God of Elijah?" If he can get Elijah's God, then the mantle will mean something! But, if not, it may even be like a garment of fire to him when he puts it on—and he will not be able to wear it becomingly. Men will see that he has Elijah's mantle, but they will ask, "Where is Elijah's power?"

Now, dear Brother, you are about to succeed a man of God. You have his mantle. The people have chosen you, so you are entering in by the door. You have not intruded into the office uncalled. You are a fit man, no doubt, to be a successor of the one who has fallen asleep, but do not be satisfied with your succession to the office. Whatever it is that has been bequeathed to you by your predecessor, be not satisfied with that, alone! Above everything else, you need his God. If you have his God, you will do very well, even if you do not have his mantle. If you should turn out to be a very different man from him who went before you—as different as Elisha was from Elijah—you will do very well if your confidence is where your holy predecessor placed *his* confidence. And you, good Sister, have undertaken the charge of a class, or some special work for Christ, and the dear Sister who went before you was a woman of renown. Her death has made a great gap in the Church and you do not feel fit to fill it. Well, never mind about *that*—if you can get her God, if you can rest in Him with a simple faith—you may go on without the slightest fear! If you have the same God as she had and have the same faith in Him, even if you do not work exactly in the same way, yet you shall bring glory to God and you shall be a blessing to those round about you! I exhort all young people who are entering upon an untried path to say to themselves, "Where is my father's God? The dear old man has fallen asleep and I am apt to cry, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof,' but I have now to follow him. Oh, that I may have the same Spirit resting upon me! The same God to come to my succor! Then I shall do well enough." You see, then, dear Friends, this question of Elisha is an important one, but most of all, when you are entering upon some untried work—"Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

This question also comes in most appropriately when some great difficulty lies in your way. Before Elisha, the Jordan is flowing, a deep and rapid stream—how is he to cross it? He takes the mantle which those

waters knew before, when Elijah passed that way, and striking them with it, he cries, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" And the waters at once divide and the Prophet walks through! Have you come to a great difficulty, my dear Friend? Can you not get over it? Are you in trouble about it? Now, if this is a difficulty that ought to be removed, the shortest way to have it removed is to go to God about it! If it is one that ought not to be removed, then you also have done rightly in going to God, for He who will *not* remove it will at least give you Grace to glorify Him in some other way! The best thing we can do, in all times of trouble and trial, is to lay the matter before the Lord.

Here is a Church in difficulty. It does not know what to do, or which way to look. This is the question for its members to ask, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" Here is a Christian man in great difficulties. He has not brought himself into them, but the pressure of the times has brought him into a very sad condition—what is he to do? Why, look to his God and see what God will do! Let him also cry, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" I do not think that we shall ever find that any man who truly trusted in God was yet confounded. No difficulty which was ever propounded to the Most High and left in His hands ever remained very long a difficulty. He has the solution of all our problems, the answer to all our riddles. He can work out to a blessed result all our difficulties. There is nothing which can possibly be beyond the power of Him whose name is Jehovah, the I AM, God All-Sufficient!

So, then, we learn from Elisha's question that we must ask after God when we are beginning any new work, or when there is some great difficulty in our way.

Thus have I introduced the text. Now there are two things I wish to speak upon. The first is, *this question turned into a prayer.* "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" Though it reads like an enquiry, yet there is no doubt that, properly construed, it is a prayer, an invocation. "Where is Jehovah, the God of Elijah?" Secondly, if we have time, we will have a few words together upon *this question answered.* "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

I. First, then, let us think of THIS QUESTION TURNED INTO A PRAYER and let us, ourselves, pray it as we meditate upon it—"Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

That means, first, *the Lord that kept Elijah faithful when all the rest of the nation turned* aside. Elijah could say, with some little exaggeration, "I, only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away." Jezebel, that imperious Sidonian queen, held Ahab entirely under her power, and she had set up the worship of the goddess Ashtaroth, which had straightway become popular all over the land, though it was accompanied by foul and filthy rites. And side by side with that was the worship of Baal. The worship of the Most High God was carried on by the faithful few, but they generally consisted of the very poorest of the land. And they were molested, persecuted and hunted to the death by the cruel and idolatrous zeal of Jezebel. But there was one man, at least, whom Ahab and Jezebel could not touch—one man who was Ahab's master, who spoke out for

Jehovah even to the king's face, and who stood alone, and cried, "The God that answers by fire, let Him be God." When the fire-answer had come, he cried to the people, "Take the prophets of Baal, let not one of them escape." That man, when all the waters raged around him, stood like a rock, unmoved and unmovable! For the most part of his life he was steadfast and firm.

This is the kind of men that we need today. Look how the whole world seems to be rocking and reeling, and men are continually asking for one novelty after another! This cry for something fresh has led to the casting off of the worship of God. "No!" you say. "Yes!" I say. They worship, today, many gods and many lords—gods newly come up, which our fathers knew not! But Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, is scarcely known among us! Men, so far as they could, have dethroned Him. They have set up an effeminate being whom they call their god—a god without justice, a god whose name has no terror in it, as the name Jehovah has—as we read the story of it in the Old Testament. We need, nowadays, to have men who will say, "We worship no new god. The God of the Old Testament, who is also the God of the New—this God is our God forever and ever! He shall be our Guide even unto death." You know how they cry down Jehovah. They will not have Him! At least they will not have Him on His throne. His sovereignty is a thing that is scoffed at and made a by-word almost everywhere. And yet, Beloved, Jehovah reigns! He sits upon the floods. He rules as King forever and ever and unto His blessed name we will give praise, whatever others may do!

In these days, too, we need men who can stand steadfast for all kinds of truth—not only as doctrines, but in practice. We need you, young men, to be upright and honest in your trade, when so many tradesmen all around you do all sorts of evil things in order to get gain. We need you, young men, to confess Christ in the workshop and to stand up for Him amidst the mass of your associates who keep not the Sabbath, neither regard the worship of God at all! Do you ask, "How can we be kept steadfast?" The answer is, "Where is Jehovah, the God of Elijah?"—for He that held him up can hold us up! I would that we had ten thousand men like John Knox was in Scotland—men that could not be turned aside from the Truth of God—men that knew the power of it in their hearts and that knew the practice of it by being sanctified of the Spirit of God and who, therefore, were "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." We shall never have such men unless they find the Lord God of Elijah! So let us all seek for Him.

Next, this question," Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" reminds me of *Elijah's mighty power in prayer.* A man of like passions with ourselves was this Elijah, yet God gave to him the key of prayer and he locked up Heaven with a turn of his hand! And when the time came, he went up to the top of Mount Carmel and put his head between his knees—and there cried to the Lord until, once again, the heavens were covered with clouds and down came a deluge of rain! This was the man who, in his chamber, prayed back the spirit of a child. This was he who could have anything of God that he wished, like Luther of old! Do not some of you say, "Would

God I had his power in prayer! How am I to get it?" Why, where he got it—from his God! The Lord God of Elijah can help you to pray prayers like his—and if He does, He will give you answers like his! It may be that you will have nothing to do with bringing or withholding rain, but you may have something to do with things quite as important that shall touch the inward lives of men and shall bring them food from Heaven, and the benediction and bedewing of the Holy Spirit. Get to your God! Lay hold upon Him by a brave and daring faith! Fall flat upon the promises and then pray straight up to the God who gave them! And so shall you get the blessing that you desire. You and I are going about after this and after that till we compass sea and land, and miss the blessing! Straightforward makes the best running. Let us go straight to God in prayer, with simple confidence in Him, and we shall not have long to ask, "Where is Jehovah, the God of Elijah?" for we shall prove that He still answers prayer even as He did in the Prophet's day.

The third rendering of the text is this—*As God provided for Elijah at the brook Cherith and at Zarephath, so can He provide for us.* I think I hear you say, "My store of meal is running very short. My flask of oil is almost empty. 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?'" Why, He is still with His Elijah and He is still with such widows as the widow of Zarephath. Do you think that He is dead? Has it crossed your mind that Divine Providence is a failure and that God will no more provide for His own? Oh, think not so! If you do, your unbelief will prove a scourge to you—it will break that meal barrel, it will dash in pieces that oil flask! You will get nothing of the Lord if you waver! But if you keep strong in faith, you shall find that Jehovah Jireh is still His name—"The Lord Will Provide." "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." God can help us to put such confidence in Him that we shall find the Lord God of Elijah supplying our daily needs and feeding us until we need no more! Sing this song, O you tried ones! Sing it at this moment—

"The Lord my Shepherd is!
I shall be well supplied
Since He is mine, and I am His,
What can I need beside?"

I see also in this great text, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" that *the God that raised the dead by Elijah is the God I need.* Oh, I have had to try to raise the dead in this place many a time and it has been done, too! Man has spoken God's mandate and as the command has been uttered, "Lazarus, come forth," full many a Lazarus has left his tomb and you, my Brothers and Sisters, by your gentle, kindly teaching, have loosed them and let them go about their daily occupation, or upon holy service, as those who have been raised from the dead! But there are still some dead ones for whom I have prayed full often and others, too, who love them, have pleaded for them. We never cease to make them the subject of our earnest supplication, but they are still as dead as they were several years ago. Shall they remain so? Shall they lie there till, at last, they become utterly corrupt? Shall it ever be said of them, "Bury the dead out of My sight"? God will say that concerning all dead souls, for He will have no

dead ones in Heaven. They must be put out of sight! They must be driven from the Presence of Christ and from the glory of His power—far from His glorious abode of peace and love! O Brothers and Sisters, pray mightily for these dead ones, for still, the Lord God of Elijah can raise them! Never despair of anybody and remember how, even when Lazarus had been so long dead that his body stank, he was nevertheless made to live! And if men go so far into evil that their sins turn to corruption and their lives become foul and loathsome, yet even *then* the quickening Spirit can make them live! Oh, let us be importunate for these dead souls! Let us still plead for them! Let us urge our suit with earnestness and perseverance—and let us never cease crying unto God for them until the dead in sin become the living in Zion! Here is the great hope for them, and here alone—that the God who raises the dead is still in the midst of His Church!

Further, we still need "the Lord God of Elijah" as *"the God that answers by fire."* Today, in this country, we are undergoing very much the same sort of ordeal as Elijah had to endure. The priests of the modern Baal and of the groves swarm on every side. The "mass" and all the other idols of Rome are set up again in this land—they may be seen as objects of adoration even in our parish churches! The candle that Latimer lit, which never can be quite put out, seems as if it burns but very dimly in this land—and the old and glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was preached by Luther and by Calvin, and by our Lord and His Apostles, has come to be regarded as an old worn-out thing, to be thrown away and cast aside. Oh, for the God of Elijah once again to answer by fire! We need a Baptism of the Holy Spirit for all such as are spiritually alive, and an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon such as know not the Lord and obey not His Truth. Oh, that we could see the Lord making bare His arm, again, in the midst of the land! When I think of how God visited Pharaoh and magnified His might by smiting that stout-hearted rebel by plague after plague, my soul cries, "O Lord, will You not split the heavens and come down, even if it is with a rod of iron, to dash in pieces, like a potter's vessel, those who have so long resisted Your Grace? Your longsuffering seems to have been displayed long enough and men grow bolder and yet bolder in their iniquity."

I can understand the spirit of Jonah—though I do not wish to fall into it—when he seemed to feel that Nineveh ought to be slaughtered for its enormous sin. At this day the world still lies in the Wicked One—and Christ Crucified is disowned and derided. Perhaps London is more heathenish than ever it was since first the feet of savages walked among its woods—the people grow worse and worse in many respects—and there is less and less of vital godliness and of seeking after the Most High. O Lord, how long? "Pluck Your right hand out of Your bosom" and, once again, as on Carmel the fire descended, so let the sacred flame fall upon Your true Church, that we may no longer need to ask, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" We need *Him,* we need HIM beyond everything in these dead days!

Now look yet again at our text—"Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" I should like to meet Him and to know Him *as the God who gave Elijah such wondrous food.* In the strength of that meat, he went for forty days! I should like to feed on that kind of fare! One grain of meal to a gallon of water is the sort of food served out by some preachers, nowadays— there is nothing in it to satisfy or to sustain the soul. But God gave Elijah forty days' meat at one meal! Do you, dear Friends, ever get meals such as that? I do, when I read certain books—not modern thought books—they give me no such meat as that, but let me have one of the good solid Puritan volumes that are so little prized, nowadays, and my soul can feed upon that! You do the same and see whether you do not find food that will last not merely for forty days, but that will make you strong to walk before the Lord, even unto the Mount of God, there to bless and adore Him forever and ever! But, oh, the milk-and-water diet that is too often given in these times! Well may we cry, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" Oh, to be fed once more upon the doctrines of discriminating Grace! Oh, to be told continually of the love without a beginning, love without a change, love without an end! Oh, to hear of an atonement that *is* an atonement, and that does, indeed, put away sin—not the kind of atonement of which many talk today, which is all mist and cloud, and which accomplishes something or nothing according as men are pleased to let it!

We need, again, to have meat unto life eternal, to know the great Truth of union to Christ, of being in Him, and so safe before the Lord, and made well-pleasing unto the Most High! God send us back this food! Brothers and Sisters, do not be satisfied until you get it! Turn from all other tables and say, "'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' Where is that flesh that is meat, indeed, and that blood which is drink, indeed?" Be content with none but Christ! Have no Gospel but Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. May God so satisfy the souls of His saints that they shall be able either to serve well or to suffer well! We are only strong either in patience or in zeal as the Lord God of Elijah feeds us with the Bread which came down from Heaven, the Bread of Life, Christ Jesus, Himself! "Lord, evermore give us this Bread!"

Once more, we need *the God who took Elijah away in a chariot of fire.* I shall close with that. I daresay many of you do not expect to go to Heaven in that way. If I had my choice between that form of translation and death, I think I would prefer to die. I never could sympathize with the great delight which some Brethren have in expecting that they shall never die. Why not? You will be a loser throughout eternity if you do not, for you will not have fellowship with Christ in His death so fully as those who fall asleep and so have fellowship with Him in the grave. It will be a great joy to meet with Christ whatever we may miss in any other way. To behold Him and to be with Him is the utmost hope of our spirits. But, still, I would not wish to miss fellowship with Him in death. What is there to be afraid of in death? "The pain," says one. What pain? "The pain in dying." There is no pain in dying! There can be none—the only pain is in

living! Death is the great *quietus.* There shall be no sorrow or sighing when death has passed upon the Believer.

What, then, are you afraid of? Of death? But has not Christ told you that you shall never die? You shall depart out of this world unto the Father and, very likely you will not know when you are going. I have personally known several friends who were always afraid of dying, but I am morally certain that they never knew anything about death, for they went to bed, one night, apparently in good health, and when they were called in the morning, it was discovered that the Lord had called them—and they had gone up to be "forever with the Lord." The placid countenance showed that there had not been any struggle, probably not even a sigh or a gasp! They shut their eyes and dreamed of Heaven—and when they awoke, they found that they were there! They had passed through no iron gates, nor struggled through any cold stream—and they were in Heaven!

"Oh," says someone, "but I am still afraid to die!" Let me tell you of one who said the same. Some years ago I was away in the South of France. I had been very ill, there, and was sitting in my room alone, for my friends had all gone down to the midday meal. All at once it struck me that I had something to do out of doors. I did not know what it was, but I walked out and sat down on a seat. There came and sat on the seat next to me a poor, pale, emaciated woman in the last stage of consumption. And looking at me, she said, "O Mr. Spurgeon, I have read your sermons for years and I have learned to trust the Savior! I know I cannot live long, but I am very sad as I think of it, for I am so afraid to die." Then I knew why I had gone out there and I began to try to cheer her. I found that it was very difficult work. After a little conversation, I said to her, "Then you would like to go to Heaven, but not to die? "Yes, just so," she answered. "Well, how do you wish to go there? Would you like to ascend in a chariot of fire?" That method had not occurred to her, but she answered, "Yes, oh, yes!" "Well," I said, "suppose there should be, just round this corner, homes all on fire, and a blazing chariot waiting there to take you up to Heaven—do you feel ready to step into such a chariot?"

She looked at me, and she said, "No, I would be afraid to do that." "Ah," I said, "and so would I. I would tremble a great deal more at getting into a chariot of fire than I would at dying! I am not fond of being behind fiery homes, I would rather be excused from taking such a ride as that." Then I said to her, "Let me tell you what will probably happen to you. You will most likely go to bed some night and you will wake up in Heaven." That is just what did happen to her not long after. Her husband wrote to tell me that after our conversation she had never had any more trouble about dying—she felt that it was the easiest way into Heaven, after all—and far better than going there in a whirlwind with horses of fire and chariots of fire! And by His Grace she gave herself up for her Heavenly Father to take her home in His own way. And so she passed away, as I expected, in her sleep.

Now I want you, dear Friends, to feel that your great need in dying is to have "the Lord God of Elijah" with you. If you have Him, then you may

cry, "Come, horses of fire, and chariots of fire, we are not afraid to ride behind these fiery steeds if 'the Lord God of Elijah' is with us!" Oh, no! Or it may be, "Come, silent chamber. Come, bed made hard with weary weeks of pain. Come, at last, the message that the wheel is broken at the cistern and that we must depart. Come Death and come celestial band, to bear my soul away." Thus you will have such a sweet realization of the Presence of "the Lord God of Elijah" with you that you will not be at all afraid! You timid ones are sure to "play the man" when you come to die. Often, the most trembling saints are the boldest at the last. I have known some who dared hardly call their souls their own, they were so full of doubts and fears, but when they have come to the river, they have been the bravest of the brave! You remember how Mr. Bunyan says of poor Miss Much-Afraid, Mr. Despondency's daughter, that she went through the river singing! Some of God's Great-Hearts, when they have died, have found the water up to their chin and it is a glorious thing for them to be able to stand there—to feel the bottom beneath their feet and to know that it is good to let Death do his worst and, all the while to be shouting, "Victory, victory, victory, I am more than conqueror through Him that loved me!" But if you are weak, feeble and timid, you will very likely die in a different way—you will probably have a sweet, calm, happy, blessed passage. "The Lord God of Elijah" will be with you and you shall triumph at the last, even as He did!

You see, dear Friends, that the time has gone, though I have only been able to speak upon the first part of my subject. So you must come another time for the second part, if the Lord wills.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 KINGS 17.

Verse 1. *And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Load God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.* How abruptly this man breaks in upon the scene! He leaps like a lion from the thicket. There is no previous announcement of his coming, but here he stands, God's own man ordained to bear witness in evil times—to stand like a bronze pillar when everything around him seems to be moving from its place! Ahab had not been accustomed to be spoken to in this fashion. Mark how personal is Elijah's message. He does not begin even by saying, as the Prophets usually did, "Thus says the Lord." There is something that at first seems almost audacious about his expression—"There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." A man may sometimes seem sell-assertive when, really, he has so completely lost himself in God that he does not care what people think about him, whether they regard him as an egotist or not. Some men appear to be modest because they are proud, while others seem to be proud because they have sunk themselves and only speak so boldly because they have their Master's authority at the back of their words. Bravely did

Elijah say, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

2, 3. *And the Word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Get you hence, and turn you eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.* Of course the Prophet would have had to share in the general need unless God had provided for him and, therefore, the Lord took care that His servant should be hidden away where a brook would continue to run after the moisture had departed from other places.

4. *And it shall be that you shall drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.* Perhaps someone says, "Ravens were more likely to *rob* the Prophet than *to feed* him!" And so they were. Some have objected that these ravens were unclean. What if they were? Things are not made unclean because they are carried by unclean creatures. Did not Abigail bring to David food upon animals which were unclean? There is no sense in that objection! "Oh, but," somebody else asks, "how should ravens bring food?" How should they not, if God commanded them? All creatures are under His control. Granted a God—and a miracle is simple enough. If God does not feed His people by any other means, He will command ravenous beasts and unclean birds to feed them!

5. *So he went and did according to the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.* It is the glory of Elijah that he does whatever God bids him, asking no questions. He simply, like a child, goes to the brook just as, like a hero, he had previously stood before the king.

6, 7. *And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. And it came to pass, after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.* Brooks will dry up, even if godly men are being sustained by them. Is there anyone here whose brook is drying up? Has it quite dried up? Still trust in God, for, if the ravens are put out of commission, God will employ some other agency.

8, 9. *And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Arise, get you to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain you.* It was a time of famine, yet God sent him to a widow woman! She is sure to need sustaining, herself. Yes, and she shall get it, too, through sustaining the Prophet! He that could command the ravens to feed His servant, could command a widow woman to do the same thing—and He did. This woman does not appear to have been originally a worshipper of Jehovah. She lived in a heathen country and probably was, herself, a heathen, but she reverenced the servant of Jehovah and she did his bidding and, no doubt, became a true follower of the living God.

10. *So he arose and went to Zarephath.* There is the same unreasoning faith—"So he arose"—just as, in the 5th verse, it is written, "So he went," that is, with all alacrity, as a matter of course, he did his Lord's bidding without any question.

10. *And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there.* There she was, the woman who was to sustain him! She had come, no doubt, with a carriage and pair, to take him home, to her mansion. Oh, no! "The widow woman was there."

10. *Gathering sticks.* She was a poor woman to sustain him, but there she was, "gathering sticks."

10. *And he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray you, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.* Water was scarce then—every drop was very precious—it was, therefore, a large request that Elijah made of her.

11. *And as she was going to fetch it.* For she saw, by his garment, and by his majestic bearing, that he was a messenger of God. "As she was going to fetch it"—

11, 12. *He called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray you, a morsel of bread in your hand. And she said, As the LORD your God lives, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.* It was such a little quantity, that two sticks would be quite enough. Yet this is the woman who is to sustain Elijah! Poor creature, she needs someone to sustain her and her son! How often does God use very strange means for the accomplishment of His blessed purposes!

13. *And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as you have said: but make me thereof a little cake, first, and bring it unto me, and afterwards make for you and for your son.* What a trial for her faith! This stranger must have the first portion of her last meal—yet she had faith enough to obey his word.

14, 15. *For thus says the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah.* Faith is blessedly contagious! God, by His Spirit, can make the faith of one to beget faith in others. This woman learns, from the very boldness of Elijah, from the very strength of his countenance, to believe in God! And she does as he tells her.

15-18. *And she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the Word of the LORD, which He spoke by Elijah. And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with you, O you man of God? Have you come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?* Poor creature, having lost her husband, her heart was wrapped up in her son! Under this sharp trial, she condemned herself and she also began to have hard thoughts of the man of God. We, none of us, know what we may say when we are overwhelmed with a great trouble. It is easy to find fault with the utterance of a poor distracted spirit and to say, "That is improper language." Have you never spoken so in the hour of your grief? Blessed is that man from whose lips there has never escaped a wrong word in the time of his anguish! This widow woman was a

mother with a dead child in the house—do not find fault with her, but tenderly pity her—and all who are in a like case.

19, 20. *And he said unto her, Give me your son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, have You also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?* The words of the woman had touched his heart and, perhaps, he also spoke unadvisedly. But who are we that we should judge? He seemed to feel that wherever he went, he was bringing trouble upon people. All Israel was afflicted with drought because of his prophecy and now this poor woman had lost her darling child. Yet even in this desperate case he did not give up hope, and prayer, and effort.

21. *And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray You, let this child's soul come into him, again.* This was splendid faith on the part of the Prophet. Nobody had ever prayed, before, for the restoration of one who was dead. No one had ever attempted to work such a miracle as this, but Elijah's faith was strung up to a wonderful pitch! Here was faith ready to receive the blessing, so the blessing would surely come. Here was the faith that could move mountains and stir the very gates of death! Elijah treads an unaccustomed road and asks for what had never been given before.

22, 23. *And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him, again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, your son lives.* Elijah was never a man of many words. He was a Prophet mighty in deeds. He said little, but what he did, spoke loudly.

24. *And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the Word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.* Did she not know this before? Yes, or else she would not have given him the first portion of her meal. She must have known it, for she had been living for a long time upon the meal and the oil which he had multiplied. But now she said that she knew it, as if she had never known it before. God has a way of bringing His Truth home to the heart with such vividness that, though we have been perfectly acquainted with it for years, yet we are compelled to cry, "Now I know it! Now I have it as I never had it before! Now I grasp it and embrace it with my very soul!" May we all know the Truth of God in this grand fashion! Amen.

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

A PRAYER FOR EVERYBODY
NO. 2597

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT CHRIST CHURCH, WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD,
(during the renovation of the Tabernacle),
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 23, 1883.

"Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me!"
Matthew 15:25.

OUR text tells us of a case of real distress and it shows us how a woman prayed when in agony. It is a good thing, when young people begin to write, especially if they think of writing for the press, if they will, before they send away their manuscript, take their pen and strike out every superfluous word. Even as a general rule, for conversation or for correspondence, every word that we can do without is better omitted. As it is difficult to travel if we are encumbered with a great quantity of luggage, so is it difficult to make our meaning clear when it is crushed beneath the weight of too many words. Take your pen, then, young author. Sit down quickly and strike out all the merely ornamental words that you have written. And when you have got rid of them, you will probably have some respectable sentences left.

This woman had no need to omit any of her words, for she was not in a state of mind to utter a sentence that could be pruned of a single word. She was in such a condition that every word that came out of her mouth was like hot shot poured out of her heart. I had almost said that every letter, as well as every syllable and every word she uttered, was coined in blood. She speaks, at any rate, burning language, at blood heat, and the words, as they drop into my ears, come with a kind of overpowering force, so great is their intensity. "Lord, help me!" There is not a syllable to spare! The words are all short, simple, living, burning—from the first one to the last.

I like this kind of pleading and I commend it to you who are accustomed to pain and sufferings, or who have to do with this rough world, as many of you have. You find that in your time of distress, you have to throw away a great many merely ornamental things and you only keep what is real, solid, and substantial. Here is a woman who must deal in realities, for she has at home a real daughter, really tormented by a real devil. But she believes that before her there is a real Savior and she intends not to let Him slip away through any lack of intensity on her part! She follows Him with clamorous cries! If she is repulsed, she still pursues Him, and when, at last, He gives her what looks like a wry word,

she will not believe it! But she adores Him, she worships Him and she cries out of the depths of her soul, "Lord, help me!" I want to speak especially about her prayer. We have begun with it and we will end with it. But before I get to the prayer, there are two or three other things I need to hold up for your admiration.

I. First, let us ADMIRE THIS WOMAN'S IMPORTUNITY.

I do not hesitate to say, although I am speaking in a large assembly, that there is not one person here who ever did experience such rebuffs or meet with such difficulties as this woman did. There may be some who would have a right to stand up, and say, "Ah, Sir, you do not know my experience—my coming to Christ was very difficult." I do not know your experience, my dear Friend, but I feel sure of this—your experience *cannot* be compared with hers, for, in her coming to Christ, she had to surmount greater difficulties than you ever knew—and greater difficulties than any of you are realizing now, even though you should be almost driven to despair by the obstacles in your pathway. This poor woman had three special difficulties.

The first was, that *the Lord Jesus Christ did not answer her cries.* "He answered her not a word." He was, Himself, the Word, and yet He did not give her the word she needed! Jesus is the blessed Spokesman of the Eternal, by whom God breaks the infinite silences and speaks to man. Yet, "He answered her not a word." He was in the habit of answering prayer, yet He gave her not a single word of response to her petition. He had never been known to turn away a sincere suppliant without a kind reply, yet He gave her not one word! But even then, though she had not a word from Christ to hang her hopes upon—not a promise, not a single word of invitation or encouragement— she still clung to Christ and would not let Him go until He blessed her.

There is not one of you, dear Friends, who can say that our Lord Jesus Christ has not spoken to you, for here is a Book full of His words—a Book, mark you, not a line of which this poor woman had ever seen! She lived in a region where the Old Testament was altogether unknown and the New Testament was not then written. But you have the Words of Christ in your homes! They lie upon the pew-ledge in front of you. You can carry them in your pockets where yet you go. A two-penny Testament can be had by everybody, so it cannot be said that Jesus Christ has not given you a Word. Then how often have you had good Words from Christ through the preacher of the Gospel! How often has He let fall handfuls on purpose for you, poor troubled Soul! You have had sweet Words, gracious Words—

"Wonderful Words of Life"—

and plenty of them, too. Therefore I say that there is one point in which this woman's difficulties far exceeded yours! And as she pressed on until she gained the desire of her heart, will not you do likewise? Do you not remember how the men of Nineveh hung on to nothing but this—"Who

can tell?" It was a very poor 1ittle nail that they clung to—"Who can tell?" Yet they did cling to it and they found mercy!

There have been some who have found comfort in what God has *not* said—"I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain." So will you not find comfort in what He *has* said? Especially may you be cheered and blessed by such words as these—"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." "I will pardon them whom I reserve." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Now, between "not a Word," and all these Words, what a difference there is, and so, what a difference there is between you and this poor woman! How much you have to help you! Come, then, to Jesus, come even *now*, pleading the promise, and you shall not go away without the blessing!

Next, this woman had another great difficulty, and that was that *all the disciples were against her.* They said to Jesus, "Send her away, for she cries after us. She disturbs us; we cannot hear Your exposition. We cannot be heard, ourselves, which is also very important. 'Send her away, send her away.' She has such a harsh voice. She does not speak our language. She talks in the tongue of Tyre or Sidon, and we do not like it. She is so troublesome! She is first bawling out after John and next she is calling after Peter—there is no keeping her quiet! 'Send her away, send her away.'" Now, although this must have been a very secondary thing compared with Christ's silence, yet it may have bred in her heart great discouragement and she may have felt in her spirit that she could not long hold out. Yet she did hold out until the blessing came!

Now, I venture to say that there is no one here *who is seeking the Savior who* has had Christ's disciples against Him. O dear Heart, there are *many* in this house tonight who are not against you! They would do anything they could for you, to cheer you and bring you to the Savior! I know some who, when this service is over, will very likely waylay you in the aisles! They are always looking out to find persons who may be under concern of soul, to see whether they can utter a word of encouragement to them. They will not say, "Send her away!" They will want you to stay a little while and will talk to you very earnestly about your soul—and try to point out to you the way into life and peace. I am sure that you have not the difficulty that this poor woman had. If you had, I would still exhort you to imitate her importunity, but, as you have not, let her importunity shame you if you are in the least degree backward! And come you at once boldly to the Savior and say, "I must now find the mercy that I need! I cannot go away until I find it." God grant that many of you may make that good resolution!

There was, however, a third discouragement which must have been greater than the other two, and that was that when the Savior did speak, He said, "I *am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* It

was as much as saying, "I am not sent to this woman of Tyre and Sidon. I can do nothing for her within the bounds of My commission." And yet, when the woman heard that sentence, instead of being daunted by it, she came to Christ and worshipped Him, and said, "Lord, help me!" I may be addressing someone who has been thinking over the Doctrine of Election—a doctrine which ought not to give trouble to anybody, but it often does. It may be that you have said in your heart, "What if I should not be elect? What if the blessed things of the Covenant of Grace should not be for me?" I beseech you, do not be persuaded by Satan to stop there, but go to Jesus just as this woman did! She seemed to say to herself, "Whether this Christ of God is sent to a Tyre and Sidon woman or not, I shall go and worship Him, and cry, 'Lord, help me!'" She heard that Christ was not sent to that country, but she seemed to say, "If You are not sent, Lord, yet I am still here. If You are not sent to me, perhaps I am sent to You. She felt that there must be some way of getting over the difficulty. She believed that, by some kind of ingenuity, even if she could not tell how, the difficulty could be removed! This glorious, loving Savior, into whose radiant face she looked, could not repulse her—she felt that He could not!

And, dear Friends, I can no more believe that Christ will repulse a sinner than I can look up to the sun and believe that it will ever freeze me! It cannot be—it is too bright, too full of warmth to turn me into ice—and I cannot look into the Savior's face and believe that He will ever cast away a poor soul that comes to Him! So, somehow or other, this poor woman seemed to feel, "I cannot get over the difficulty, but I will go round it." That is always a wise method. For my own part, I have often learned what a joy it is to cast anchor under the lee of a great impassable thing that I cannot understand. I like, if I am traveling, to see the river open up and to find my boat gliding gently along between the surrounding hills. But if, all of a sudden, I find that the channel is entirely blocked up, I am just as comfortable if the sailor lets down the anchor and we spend the night under the lee of some big, towering rock! Why not? It is very well to understand things, but I do not know that we are much the better for understanding anything! Understanding sometimes puffs us up, but we are always benefited by believing. So, my Friend, when you come hard and fast against something which you cannot get over, do not try to get over it, but just pull up, right there, and say, "If it is so, let it be so, but, anyway, God is gracious, Christ is merciful and I am going to cast myself at the crucified Savior's feet and trust in Him."

Now this woman, notwithstanding this terrible discouragement, after actually hearing the Savior say, "I am not sent to you," yet nevertheless persevered with her appeal. None of you have ever heard Him say that you are not among the elect. Why should you not be elect as well as anybody else? None of you have ever climbed to Heaven and found that your names were not written in the roll of God's chosen—and you never will climb there to read it at all! All such things are hidden from your sight.

Your business is to cling to Christ's dear feet and never let Him go until He grants you the desire of your heart. That is my first remark—admire this woman's importunity.

II. Now for a few minutes I invite you, dear Friends, to ADMIRE HER RESORT TO THE LORD HIMSELF. "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me!"

She is to be admired, first, *because she turned away from the disciples.* I could not help smiling as I read, just now, what the disciples said, "Send her away, for she cries after us." Poor soul, she never cried after *them*—she knew better than to do that! It was their own self-importance that made them think so. If she had begun to cry after *them*, their black looks would soon have stopped her from doing so. But she did not make such a mistake as that. "Oh, no," she seemed to say, "it is not after you that I am crying. Neither Peter, nor James, nor John can give me the help I need." So is it with us—we are not crying after the saints, as some poor souls are doing, hoping that saints, long since dead and buried, who have done with this mortal life, may make intercession for them before the Throne of God! No, we are not crying after them. If any of you are, I pray you cease that folly and cry to the Master! And let this be your cry, "Lord, help me!" Not, "Peter, help me," nor, "Mary, help me," but, "Jesus, help me!" "Lord, help me!" He can do it, but the saints cannot. They were poor sinners who had to be saved by Grace like the rest of us—and they are now singing to the praise of the God of Grace, but they have no Grace to give to us! Mind, dear Friends, that you never think of going to them, but go straight to the Master, as this poor woman did! "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me!"

She went *away, also, from all prescribed paths.* The Savior seemed to say to her that there was no way for her to come. He did but seem to tell her that the road at present was intended especially for the house of Israel and He had come to bless them beyond all others. But the woman seems to say, "If there is not a road open, I must make one. I will go over hedge and ditch, but I must find my Savior." Her heart was so strongly resolved upon coming to Christ that whether she came in the orthodox way or not, she must come! Oh, how I wish that some poor sinner here might be so stirred up with the same desire that he would say, "I must somehow find the Lord Jesus. If I have heard one minister and God has not blessed him to me, I will hear another. And if hearing the Gospel is not blessed to me, I will sit up at night and read the Scriptures. And if the Bible is not blessed to me, I will go on my knees and cry to God for mercy and I will never cease crying to Him till the mercy comes. For, somehow or somewhere, I must get it! I must find God in Christ Jesus, that I may obtain the salvation of my soul."

Yet once more, dear Friends, I admire this woman, and I hold her up as a model for your imitation, because she resorted to Christ. Away from the disciples and from all prescribed paths, she *went to* HIM. Yes, that is the beauty of it! "Then came she and *worshipped* HIM." She fell at His

feet and her prayer was, "Lord, help me!" She did not prescribe how she should be helped, for she believed in His wisdom. She did not dictate to Him what He should do, for she believed in His judgment and prudence. All she said was, "Lord, help me!" She did not think that her case was beyond His power, for she believed in His almightiness, so she prayed, "Lord, help me!" She did not think her case could be beyond His pity, so she pleaded, "Lord, help me. True, I am only a Gentile dog but, Lord, help me. I am a Syrophenician woman but, Lord, help me. I have a poor daughter possessed of a devil but, Lord, help me." She pleads thus with Christ and it is amazing what such pleading can accomplish! Do not come here and merely repeat certain prayers! Do not go home to your closet simply to say prayers as if to nobody or to everybody, but get absolutely at the feet of Jesus and plead with Him, saying, "Lord, I will not let You go until You bless me," for that is the kind of prayer that opens the gates of Heaven, the prayer to which nothing can be denied!

III. Before I come to the closing portion of my discourse, I ask you to ADMIRE THIS WOMAN'S APPROPRIATION OF HER DAUGHTER'S CASE TO HERSELF.

I urge you who seek the conversion of others to follow her example. Notice, she did not pray, "Lord, help my daughter," but, "Lord, help *me*!" At first, she pleaded for her daughter and mentioned the circumstances of her case, but as she grew more intense and fervent in her supplication, there seemed to be no division between the mother and the daughter! The mother had absorbed the daughter—the great heart of the pleading one seemed to contain the one pleaded for with all her agony—"Lord, help me!" Do you catch the idea? When you are pleading with God for your Sunday school class, it is not simply, Mary, and Jane, and Sarah that you pray for, but you have incorporated all those girls into *yourself* and, therefore, you plead, "Lord, help me!" And you, my Brother, need to get to this point if you are really to prevail for your scholars, that you will not be asking for John, and Thomas, and William, alone, but you have so identified yourself with them, that if they are lost, it almost seems as if you are lost! And if they are saved, it will be another Heaven to you for each one of them to be in Heaven!

You know that when Elisha restored the Shunammite's dead son, "he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child." Then, as it were, they became one, and then it was that the new life came through the Prophet into the dead child. And this is the way to pray for our scholars and our hearers. I am sure that if a minister wants conversions, he must identify himself with his people! There are people, nowadays, who make a difficulty about Moses praying for Israel, "If You will forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray You, out of Your book which You have written." And they raise questions about Paul being willing to be separated from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. Oh, but there is no difficul-

ty in the matter if you once get to feel such an intense love for the souls of men that you would, as it were, pawn your own salvation and count it little if you might but bring the people to the Savior's feet!

A man who has never felt that willingness does not yet know the true throb of a pastor's heart—he has not been ordained to be a shepherd if he would not lay down his life for the flock, if it were necessary. When you get to that point, then the blessing will come. "Lord, help me—*me,* for, in my own proper self, I am one with these people for whom my prayer is put up."

IV. Now, lastly—yet it is the chief part of the subject—I want YOU TO ADMIRE THIS WOMAN'S PRAYER, ITSELF.

I began my discourse by pointing out to you its sententiousness, its freedom from superfluities. Now, again I bid you admire it for the same reason. Notice that *it asks everything in one little phrase*—"Lord, help me!" It seems to me to be a very comprehensive prayer, for although it uses but one very small verb, that verb means a great deal more than, at first sight, it appears to mean. When the woman said, "Lord, help me," she did not mean what we generally mean by help. That is, "Lord, do something for me and I will do the rest." She could not do *anything* towards the casting out of the devil from her child so, by that word, "help," she meant, "Lord, do it all," for that is the kind of help Christ gives! Have you ever heard of the poor half-witted being who, nevertheless, had sense enough to understand the Gospel? Someone said to him, "Well, Johnny, how were you saved?" "Oh," he answered, "Jesus Christ did His part, and I did all the rest." "And pray tell, Johnny, what did you do?" "Well," he said, "Jesus Christ saved me and I did all I could to prevent it." And that is about all "the rest" that any of us ever do! We do not really help in the matter of our salvation, for we cannot—it is Christ's work from first to last—and Divine Grace must have all the praise for it. Blessed be that Sovereign Grace of God!

But that word, "help," meant just this—"Lord, will You do all that is needed? I am in a dreadful fix. I cannot cure my poor child and I cannot pray aright about her. You have almost shut my mouth by that last word, 'I am not sent,' yet, 'Lord, help me!' Teach me what to ask for! Teach me how to ask for it! Teach me what to think of next! Teach me what to do next. Never was a poor creature in such a plight as I am, Lord. Get me out of it! Save my poor daughter." It was asking everything in a phrase which did not, at first sight, seem to mean much—"Lord, help me!"

And, if you notice, *the prayer was one which brought Christ and the poor woman together*—"Lord" and "me." And here is the link—"Lord, help me!" Some of you poor creatures want to get to Christ by doing something for Him! You have undertaken a very heavy task—you will never get to Him that way. The only way is for Him to stoop down and do something for you—then you shall go into partnership and have fellowship with one another. And if you agree to this arrangement, He will find eve-

rything that is needed and you shall have it all given to you, gratis! Those must be the terms—that He, from first to last, must do all, and be all, and have all the glory! If you will agree to that condition, the company may be started at once—and what a blessed company it shall be! The Lord and yourself linked together by that little word, "help"—"Lord, help me!" If you are to succeed as this woman did, you must imitate her perseverance even in spite of Christ's apparent refusal to help her.

This is a lesson which is taught us in many other parts of the Word of God. She that wins her suit with the unjust judge is the importunate widow who will not be refused. He that gets the loaves at midnight is the man who continues knocking till his friend awakens *himself* and gives him all he asks. O Beloved, plead thus with God! Plead earnestly, plead for your salvation as you would for your life! Lift up the cry—

"Gracious Lord, incline Your ear,
My requests vouchsafe to hear!
Hear my never-ceasing cry,
Give me Christ, or else I die!
Wealth and honor I disdain,
Earthly comforts all are vain.
These can never satisfy,
Give me Christ, or else I die!"

And you shall surely have Christ, for He never finally refuses to listen to such pleading as that.

Lastly, dear Friends, I commend this prayer to you because it is such *a handy prayer.* You can use it when you are in a hurry, you can use it when you are frightened, you can use it when you have not time to bow your knees. You can use it in the pulpit if you are going to preach, you can use it when you are opening your shop, you can use it when you are rising in the morning. It is such a handy prayer that I hardly know any position in which you could not pray it—"Lord, help me!" Often, when you are brought to some great emergency, you may use it and feel as if it were the best prayer that was ever composed. Do you suffer much? Do you sometimes fall back upon the pillows feeling that you cannot bear any more? Does it not seem natural, then, for you to pray, "Lord, help me"? Do you often lie awake at night? Have you counted the clock round in your seasons of suffering? Oh, then, I know that you will feel that this is a good prayer to offer in the middle of the night—"Lord, help me!" Do you wake up in the morning just as weary as when you went to bed? Are you gradually losing strength? Are you slowly wasting away? Do they tell you that you will soon be gone? Oh, then, as the clock ticks, I think it may remind you of this prayer, "Lord, help me! Lord, help me! Lord, help me!" It is a sick woman's prayer—a sick child's prayer—a sick man's prayer. It will suit any of you at such times.

Or are some of you losing a great deal of money just now? Is business very bad? Are you out of a job? Have you walked up and down the streets and worn your shoes out, and yet found nothing to do? I think this prayer will suit you at this moment and all day tomorrow, "Lord, help me!

Lord, help me!"—for He can, you know. The keys of Providence are not taken out of His hand yet. He knows how to deliver the righteous out of all their troubles. Go to Him with this prayer, "Lord, help me!"

Are any of you very much tempted from without by surroundings that are peculiarly dangerous? Are you tempted by Satan? Are any of you exposed, just now, to some very special trial? Have your feet almost gone? Have your steps well-near slipped? Now here is a prayer that will hold you up and keep you from falling—"Lord, help me! Lord, help me!"

"No," says someone, "you have not touched my case yet" Perhaps you are going to a new job, or you are just undertaking fresh duties and you wonder how you will be able to fill the sphere which was occupied so well by the one who went before you? Well, do not enter upon that new sphere without this prayer, "Lord, help me!" If you pray that prayer from your heart, you will be encouraged—you shall play the man and do well for God and for His Truth. Possibly you are already in a situation where you are under great strain. Where, perhaps, your physical strength is overtaxed and your mind is depressed by the wear and tear of a cruel servitude. Well, if you cannot get out of it, pray the Lord to help you in it, and let this be your constant cry, "Lord, help me! Lord, help me!" It is wonderful how He can aid and direct His people!

And you, young Brother against the door, you came just inside, hoping to get a message that will guide you in your present difficulty. Here is that message! Go home and pray about it. Cry to God about it and you shall have direction. And let this be your cry, "Lord, help me! Lord, help me!" And He will help you. Is there a dear little girl here who wants to find Christ? I give her this short prayer to pray tonight, "Lord, help me!" Is there a gray-headed man here, leaning upon his staff, who has not yet found the Savior? Then, as you sit in that aisle, cry, "Son of David, Jesus Christ the Lord, do help and save me!" And He will! This prayer will do to live with. This prayer will do to die with! It is a prayer for those who usually worship in this place. It is a prayer for the people in the streets all around. It is a prayer for everybody and a prayer for every place wherever you may be—"Lord, help me!"

Blessed be His name, the Lord will answer this prayer! He has helped His people! He is still Israel's Helper! He will be their Helper even to the end! Therefore put your trust in Him and go forward with confidence into the future. And may His gracious Presence be with you forevermore! Amen.

EXPOSITION:
MATTHEW 15:10-31.

Verses 10, 11. *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.* True religion does not consist in meats and drinks, in feasting or in fasting. It is not that

which goes into us, but that which comes out of us which is the main matter.

12. *Then came His disciples, and said unto Him, Know You that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?* They thought a very great deal of the opinion of the Pharisees and they were greatly concerned because their Master had offended them. These Pharisees set themselves up as the judges of everything that was correct and proper in religion! Yet Christ offended them by His plain speaking.

13. *But He answered and said, Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up.* The Truth of God is often intended to root up. I have no doubt that our Lord said many things which had no other intention than the discovery of these deceitful men to themselves and others, that their baneful influence might be destroyed. Our Savior was a true iconoclast, a great image-smasher, and these men, who were the chief *icons* or images of the day, had to be broken down. He therefore put the Truth of God in the very form that would offend them!

14. *Let them alone: they are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.* Our Lord did not soften or tone down His previous language, but He revealed the true character of the false guides by whom so many were deluded.

15. *Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Explain unto us this parable.* "We do not understand it. What is its meaning?"

16, 17. *And Jesus said, Are you also yet without understanding? Do not you yet understand that whatever enters in at the mouth goes into the belly, and is eliminated?* And so there is an end of it.

18. *But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart and they defile the man.* The main matter to be considered is the heart, not the mouth and other parts of the body. Note how our Lord, by this great Truth, puts the axe to much that looks very fair and good, and cuts it down as worthless! If we serve God with the heart, there is the core of true religion! But if not, we may have as many ceremonial washings as there are hours in the day and days in the year, and we may be careful to avoid this article of diet and to feed on that, to wear this garment and not to wear that, and to observe this day and not that—but all this outward religion will be of no use whatever—if our *heart* is not savingly affected by the Grace of God.

19-21. *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defiles not a man. Then Jesus went from there and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.* He did not like the Pharisees well enough to stay among them. His own word concerning them was, "Let them alone," and He did very severely let them alone—"Jesus went from there and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon." He must not go into Tyre and Sidon, for His commission for the present was confined to Palestine, the chosen land. Do not regret this, dear Friends. To have extended our Savior's work over a greater area

would not have been, really, to increase it. And it was very important that during the very short active lifetime of our Savior—a little more than three years—He should confine His operations to a comparatively small district, so as to produce a permanent result, there, which would afterwards radiate over the whole world. So our Savior, who knew what was best for men, confined Himself within a very narrow sphere.

And, my Brothers and Sisters, I am not sure that we are always wise when we desire a great sphere. I have myself sometimes envied the man with about five hundred people to watch over, who could see them all, know them all, and enter into sympathy with them all—and so could do his work well. But, with so large a number as I have under my charge, what can one man do? And you, my Brothers, may increase the quantity of your acreage, and yet grow no larger crops. You may think that you will succeed better on a wider scale, but if you do not do so well in the greater field, it might have been wiser to narrow your boundaries rather than to widen them. However, if our Lord might not go into Tyre and Sidon, He went as near to them as He could—"Jesus departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon." And if you, dear Friends, think there is a limit to your sphere of usefulness, always go as near as you can to the limit—go up to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon!

22. *And, behold.* For it is a great wonder that such a person should have come to Jesus. "And, behold"—

22, 23. *A woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word.* This was another marvel—a silent Savior—silent when it would have been so natural for Him to speak a kind and gracious word. "He answered her not a word."

23. *And His disciples came and sought Him, saying, Send her away, for she cries after us.* "'She cries after us,' and it is very important that *we* should not be troubled." We disciples are apt to think so, especially if we get a little lifted up, and come to be Apostles. "Send her away, for she cries after us." She knew better than to cry after the disciples! It was the Master whose help she needed. Some sinners are a great nuisance, they make so much noise in seeking Christ, and what a mercy it is that they do so! Oh, to have such troublesome people about us all day long and all night long, too! It would be worth while to be vexed in this style. But the disciples said to Jesus, "Send her away for she cries after us."

24. *But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* "Therefore, I cannot attend to her."

25, 26. *Then she came and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me! But He answered and said, It is not meet—* "It is not comely, it is not fit."

26. *To take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.* The original means, "the little dogs that play with the children; they lie under the table, and pick up the crumbs that their masters' (the children's masters) let fall." The woman caught at that expression at once.

27. *And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.* "I may be only a dog, and these Jews round about You are Your children, but I have gotten in among them and I am looking for a crumb or two as it falls from their table." This was grand faith on her part and it was speedily rewarded!

28-31. *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. 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.* The Savior appears to have gone on this journey on purpose to bless this woman and her daughter and, having worked the miracle, He went where great multitudes came to Him, bringing their sick folk to be healed. And the result was, "They glorified the God of Israel." There may be some poor soul here in as great distress as this woman was. If so, may that one get a blessing and then may the blessing spread through all the neighborhood till multitudes are saved!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 492, 551

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SPIRITUAL REVIVAL—THE NEED OF THE CHURCH
NO. 2598

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT WHITEFIELD'S TABERNACLE, TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD,
AT THE CENTENARY COMMEMORATION,
ON TUESDAY AFTERNOON, NOVEMBER 11, 1856.

"O LORD, revive Your work."
Habakkuk 3:2.

ALL true religion is pre-eminently the work of God. If He should select out of His works that which He esteems most of all, He would select true religion. He regards the works of Grace as being even more glorious than the works of nature and He is, therefore, especially careful that this fact shall always be known, so that, if any dare to deny it, they shall do so in the teeth of repeated testimonies that God is, indeed, the Author of salvation in the world and in the hearts of men, and that religion is the effect of Grace and is the work of God. I believe the Eternal might sooner forgive the sin of ascribing the creation of the heavens and the earth to an idol, than that of ascribing the works of Grace to the efforts of the flesh, or to anyone but Himself. It is a sin of the greatest magnitude to suppose that there is anything in the heart which can be acceptable to God except that which He, Himself, has first created there. When I deny God's work in creating the sun, I deny one Truth of God, but when I deny that He works Grace in the heart, I deny a hundred Truths in one, for, in the denial of that one Truth that God is the Author of good in the souls of men, I have denied all the Doctrines which make up the great articles of faith—and I have run in direct opposition to the whole testimony of Sacred Scripture!

I trust, Beloved, that many of us have been taught that if there is anything in our souls which can carry us to Heaven, it is God's work and, moreover, that if there is anything that is good and excellent found in His Church, it is entirely God's work from first to last! We firmly believe that it is God who quickens the soul which was dead, positively "dead in trespasses and sins." That it is God who maintains the life of that soul and God who consummates and perfects that life in the home of the blessed, in the land of the hereafter. We ascribe nothing to man, but all to God! We dare not, for a moment, think that the conversion of the soul is effected either by its own efforts or by the efforts of others. We know that

there are means and agencies employed by God, but we also hold most firmly that the work is, from its alpha to its omega, wholly the Lord's. We believe, therefore, that we are right in applying our text to the work of Divine Grace, both in the heart of man and in the Church at large. And we think that we can have no subject more appropriate for our consideration than the prayer of the text—"O Lord, revive Your work."

Trusting that the Spirit of God will help me, I shall endeavor to apply the text, first, *to our own souls personally.* And, then *to the state of the Church at large,* for it greatly needs that the Lord should revive His work in its midst.

I. First, then, I will apply the text TO OUR OWN SOULS PERSONALLY.

In this matter, we should begin at home. We too often flog the Church when the whip should be laid on our own shoulders. We drag the Church, like a colossal culprit, to the altar. We bind her hands fast and try to execute her at once, or, at least, we find fault with her where there is none and magnify her little errors, while we too often forget our own imperfections. Let us, therefore, commence with ourselves, remembering that we are a part of the Church and that our own need of revival is, in some measure, the cause of that need in the Church at large. I directly charge the great majority of professing Christians in these days—and I also take the charge to myself—with a need of revival of piety. I shall lay the charge very peremptorily, because I think I have abundant grounds to prove it. I believe that the mass of nominal Christians in this age need a revival! And my reasons are these.

In the first place, look at *the conduct* of too many who profess to be the children of God. It ill becomes any man who occupies the pulpit to flatter his hearers and I shall not attempt to do so. The evil lies with those who unite themselves with Christian Churches and then practically protest against their own profession. It has become very common, nowadays, to join a church—go where you may, you find professing Christians who sit down at some Lord's Table or other, but are there fewer cheats than there used to be? Are there less frauds committed? Do we find morality more prevalent? Do we find vice entirely at an end? No, we do not! The age is as immoral as any that preceded it. There is still as much sin, although it is more cloaked and hidden. The outside of the sepulcher may be whiter, but within, the bones are just as rotten as before—society is not improved one whit! Those men who, in our popular magazines, give us a true picture of the state of London life, are to be believed and credited, for they do not stretch the truth—they have no motive for so doing—and the picture which they give of the immorality of this great city is positively appalling! It is a huge criminal, full of sin, and I fearlessly assert that if all the profession in London were true profession, it would not be nearly such a wicked place as it is! It could not be, by any manner of means.

My Brothers and Sisters, it is well known—and who dares deny it who is not too partial, and who will not speak willful lies—it is well known that it is not in these days a sufficient guarantee even of a man's honesty that he is a member of a church! It is a hard thing for a Christian minister to say, but I must say it. Someone must say it and if friends do not say it, enemies will—and it is better that the truth should be spoken in our own midst, that men may see that we *are* ashamed of it, than that they should hear us impudently deny what we must know to be true! O Sirs, the lives of too many members of Christian Churches give us grave cause to suspect that there is none of the life of godliness in them at all! Why that reaching after money, why that covetousness, why that following of the crafts and devices of a wicked world, why that clutching here and grasping there, that grinding of the faces of the poor, that treading down of the workman and such like things, if men are truly what they profess to be? God in Heaven knows that what I speak is true—and too many here know it themselves! If they are Christians, at least they desire revival! If there is any spiritual life in them, it is but a spark that is covered up with heaps of ashes! It needs to be fanned, yes, and it needs to be stirred, also, that hopefully some of the ashes may be removed and the spark may have a place to live!

The Church as a whole needs revival in the persons of its members. The members of Christian Churches are not what they once were. It is now fashionable to be religious—persecution is taken away and, ah, I had almost said that the gates of the Church were taken away with it! The Church has, with few exceptions, no gates now—persons come in and go out of it just as they would march through St. Paul's Cathedral and make it a very place of traffic, instead of regarding it as a select and sacred spot, to be apportioned to the holy of the Lord, and to the excellent of the earth—in whom is God's delight. If this is not true, you know how to treat it. You need not confess to sin you have not committed. But if it is true, and true in your case, oh, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God! Ask Him to search and try you, that if you are not His child, you may be helped to renounce your profession lest it should be to you but the gaudy pageantry of death—and mere tinsel and gewgaw in which to go to Hell! If you are His, ask that He may give you more Grace, that you may abandon these faults and follies and turn to Him with full purpose of heart, as the effect of a revived godliness in your soul.

Again, where *the conduct* of professing Christians is consistent, let me ask the question, does not *the conversation* of many a professor lead us either to doubt the genuineness of his piety, or else to pray that his piety may be revived? Have you noticed the conversation of many who think themselves Christians? You might live with them from the first of January to the end of December and you would never be tired of their religion by what you would hear of it. They scarcely mention the name of Jesus

Christ at all! On Sabbath afternoon, all the ministers are talked over—faults are found with this one and the other—and conversation takes place which they call religious because it is concerning religious places and Christian people. But do they ever—

"Talk of all He did, and said,
And suffered for us here below.
The path He marked for us to tread,
And what He's doing for us now"?

Do you often hear the question addressed to you by your Christian Brother, "Friend, how does your soul prosper?" When we step into each other's houses, do we begin to talk concerning the cause and Truth of God? Do you think that God would now stoop from Heaven to listen to the conversation of His Church, as once He did, when it was said, "The Lord hearkened and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name"? I solemnly declare, as the result of thorough and, I trust, impartial observation, that the conversation of Christians, while it cannot be condemned on the score of morality, must often be condemned on the score of Christianity! We talk too little about our Lord and Master!

That ugly word, "sectarianism," has crept into our midst and we must say nothing about Christ because we are afraid of being called sectarians! Well, Brothers and Sisters, I am a sectarian and hope to be so till I die and to glory in it, for I cannot see, nowadays, that a man can be a Christian, thoroughly in earnest, without winning for himself that title! Why, we must not talk of this doctrine because, perhaps, such an one disbelieves it! We must not mention such-and-such a Truth in Scripture because such-and-such a friend doubts or denies it! And so we drop all the great and grand topics which used to be the staple commodities of godly talk and begin to speak of anything else because we feel that we can agree better on worldly things than we can on spiritual! Is not that the truth? And is it not so common a sin with some of us that we have need to pray unto God, "O Lord, revive Your work in my soul, that my conversation may be more Christ-like, more seasoned with salt and more pleasing to the Holy Spirit"?

My third remark is that there are some whose conduct is all that we could wish, whose conversation is for the most part as becomes the Gospel of Christ and savory of truth—but even they will confess to a third charge, which I must now sorrowfully bring against them and against myself, namely, that *there is too little real communion with Jesus Christ.* If, thanks to Divine Grace, we are enabled to keep our conduct tolerably consistent and our lives unblemished, yet how much have we to cry out against ourselves because of our lack of that holy fellowship with Jesus which is the mark of the true child of God! Brothers and Sisters, let me ask you how long it is since you have had a love-visit from Jesus Christ? How long since you could say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His; He

feeds among the lilies"? How long is it since He brought you into His banqueting house and His banner over you was love? Perhaps some of you will be able to say, "It was but this morning that I saw Him. I beheld His face with joy and was ravished with His Countenance." But I fear the most of you will have to say, "Ah, Sir, for months I have been without the shining of His Countenance!" What have you been doing, then, and what has been your way of life? Have you been groaning every day? Have you been weeping every minute? "No." Then you ought to have been! I cannot understand how your piety can be of any very brilliant order if you can live without the sunlight of Christ and yet are happy.

Christians will sometimes lose the realization of Jesus. The connection between themselves and Christ will be, at times, severed as to their own conscious enjoyment of it, but they will always groan and cry when they lose that Presence. What? Is Christ your Brother and does He live in your house and yet you have not spoken to Him for a month? I fear there is little love between you and your Brother if you have had no conversation with Him for so long. What? Is Christ the Husband of His Church and has she had no fellowship with Him for all this time? Brothers and Sisters, let me not condemn you, let me not even judge you, but let your own conscience speak! Mine shall and so shall yours. Have we not too much forgotten Christ? Have we not lived too much without Him? Have we not been content with the world instead of desiring Christ? Have all of us been like that little ewe lamb that drank out of its master's cup and fed from his table and lie in his bosom? Have we not rather been content to stray upon the mountains, feeding anywhere but at home? I fear that many of the troubles of our heart spring from lack of communion with Jesus. Not many of us are the kind of men who, living with Jesus, learn His secrets. Oh, no, we live too much without the light of His Countenance and are too content when He is gone from us! Let us, then, each of us—for I am sure we have, each of us, need in some measure—put up the prayer, "O Lord, revive Your work."

Ah, I think I hear one professor saying, "Sir, I need no revival in *my* heart. I am everything I wish to be." Down on your knees, my Brothers and Sisters, down on your knees and plead for that poor soul! He is the man who most needs to be prayed for! He says that he needs no revival in his soul, but he needs a revival of *humility*, at any rate! If he supposes that he is all that he ought to be and if he knows that he is all he wishes to be, he has very mean notions of what a Christian is, or of what a Christian should be—and very untrue ideas concerning himself! Those are in the most hopeful condition who, while they know they need reviving, yet groan under their present sad state and pray to the Lord to revive them.

Now I think I have in some degree substantiated my charge—I fear with too-strong arguments—so now let us notice that the text has something in it which I trust that each of us has. There is not only an evil im-

plied in these words, "O Lord, revive Your work," but there is an evil evidently felt. You see, Habakkuk knew how to groan about it. "O Lord," he said, "revive Your work." Ah, we, many of us, need reviving, but few of us feel that we need it. It is a blessed sign of life within when we know how to groan over our departure from the living God. It is easy to find hundreds who have thus departed, but you must count by ones and twos those who know how to groan over their departure! The true Believer, however, when he discovers that he needs revival, will not be happy. He will begin at once that incessant and continuous strain of cries and groans which will, at last, prevail with God and bring down the blessing of revival! He will, days and nights in succession, cry, "O Lord, revive Your work."

Let me mention some groaning times which will always occur to the Christian who needs revival. I am sure he will always groan *when he looks upon what the Lord did for him of old.* When he recollects the Mizars and the Hermons, and those places where the Lord appeared of old to him, saying, "I have loved you with an everlasting love," I know he will never look back to them without tears. If he is what he should be as a Christian, or if he thinks he is not in a right condition, he will always weep when he remembers God's loving kindnesses of old. Whenever the soul has lost fellowship with Jesus, it cannot bear to think of "the chariots of Amminadib." It cannot endure to remember the King's banqueting house, for it has not been there for so long! Or when it does think of them, it says—

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?
What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill."

When one who is in this state hears a sermon which relates the glorious experience of the Believer who is in a healthy condition, he puts his hand upon his heart and says, "Ah, such was my experience once, but those happy days are gone. My sun has set and those stars which once lit up my darkness are all quenched. Oh, that I might again behold my Lord! Oh, that I might once more see His face! Oh, for those sweet visits from on high! Oh, for the grapes of Eshcol once more!" If this is your condition, my Friend, you will sit down and weep by the rivers of Babylon, you will mourn when you remember your goings up to Zion when the Lord was precious to you, when He laid bare His heart and was pleased, also, to fill your heart with the fullness of His love. Such times will be groaning times, when you, "remember the years of the right hand of the Most High."

Again, to a Christian who needs revival, *ordinances* will also be groaning times. He will go up to the House of God, but he will say to himself when he comes away, "Ah, how changed it all is! When I once went with the multitude that kept holy day, every word was precious. When the song ascended, my soul had wings and up it flew to its nest above the stars! When the prayer was offered, I could devoutly say, "Amen." The preacher now preaches as he did before, and my Brothers and Sisters are as profited as they used to be, but the sermon is dry and dull to me. I find no fault with the preacher. I know the fault is in myself. The song is just the same—as sweet the melody, as pure the harmony—but ah, my heart is heavy, my harp strings are broken and I cannot sing." So the Christian will return from those blessed means of Grace, sighing and sobbing because he knows he needs revival.

More especially at the Lord's Supper he will think, when he sits at the Table, "Oh, what seasons of communion I once had here! In breaking the bread and drinking the wine, my Master was most blessedly present." He will remind himself how his soul was lifted even to the seventh Heaven and the building became to him "the House of God, and the gate of Heaven." "But now," he says, "It is only bread, and dry bread, to me. It is simply wine and tasteless wine, with none of the sweets of Paradise in it. I drink, but it is all in vain, for I have no precious thoughts of Christ. My heart is so heavy that it will not rise. My soul cannot heave a thought even half way to Him!" And then the Christian will begin to groan again, "O Lord, revive Your work."

Those of you who know that you are in Christ, but who feel that you are not in a healthy spiritual condition because you do not love Him enough, and have not that faith in Him which you desire to have, I would just ask you this—Do you groan over it? Are you groaning over it now? When you feel that your heart is empty, is it, "an aching void?" When you see that your garments are stained, are you ready to wash those garments with tears if that would do any good? When you realize that your Lord is gone, do you hang out the black flag of sorrow and cry, "O my Jesus, my precious Jesus, are You gone forever?" If you can, then I bid you do it, and may God be pleased to give you Grace to continue to do it until a happier era shall dawn in the reviving of your soul!

I remark, in the last place upon this point, that the soul, when it is really brought to feel its own sad state because of its declension and departure from God, *is never content without turning its groaning into prayer* and without addressing the prayer to the right quarter—"O Lord, revive Your work." Some of you, perhaps, will say, "Sir, I feel my need of revival. I intend to set to work this very afternoon, as soon as I shall retire from this place, to revive my soul." Do not say it and, above all things, do not try to do it, for you will never do it! Make no resolutions as to what *you* will do—your resolutions will as certainly be broken as they are made—and your broken resolutions will but increase the number of your sins! I

exhort you, instead of trying to revive yourself, to offer prayer to God. Say not, "I will revive myself," but cry, "O Lord, revive *Your* work." And let me solemnly tell you, you have not yet felt what it is to decline, you do not yet know how sad is your state, otherwise you would not talk of reviving yourself! If you knew your own position, you would as soon expect to see the wounded soldier on the battlefield heal himself without medicine, or convey himself to the hospital when his limbs are shot away, as you would expect to revive yourself without the help of God! I bid you not do anything, nor seek to do anything until, first of all, you have addressed Jehovah, Himself, by mighty prayer and have cried out, "O Lord, revive Your work." Remember, He that first made you, must keep you alive. And He that has kept you alive can alone impart more life to you! He that has preserved you from going down to the Pit when your feet have been sliding, can alone set you again upon the Rock and establish your goings. Begin, then, by humbling yourself—giving up all hope of reviving yourself as a Christian! But also begin at once with earnest supplication to God, saying, "O Lord, what I cannot do, You do! O Lord, revive Your work!"

Christian Brothers and Sisters, I leave these matters with you. Give them the attention they deserve. If I have erred, and in anything judged you too harshly, God shall forgive me, for I have meant it honestly. But if I have spoken truly, lay it to your hearts and turn your houses into a Bochim. Weep as in the olden time—men apart, and women apart, husbands apart, and wives apart. Weep, weep, my Brothers and Sisters, for it is a sad thing to depart from the living God! Weep, and may He bring you back to Zion, that you may one day return like Israel, not with weeping, but with songs of everlasting joy!

II. And now I come to the second part of the subject, upon which I must be more brief. In THE CHURCH ITSELF, taken as a body, this prayer ought to be one incessant and solemn liturgy—"O Lord, revive Your work."

In the present era there is *a sad decline of the vitality of godliness.* This age has become too much the age of form, instead of the age of life. I date the hour of life from this day one hundred years ago, when there was laid the first stone of this building in which we now worship God. Then was the day of life Divine and of power sent down from on high! God had clothed Whitefield with power. He was preaching with a majesty and a might of which one could scarcely think mortal could ever be capable! Not because he was anything in himself, but because his Master girded him with strength. After Whitefield, there was a succession of great and holy men. But now, Sirs, we have fallen upon the dregs of time. Men are the rarest things in all this world—we have hardly any men in the government to conduct our politics—and we have scarcely any men in religion. We have the *things* that perform their duties, as they are called. We have the good and, perhaps, the honest things who, in the regular routine, go on like pack horses with their bells in the old style. But men who

dare to be singular, because to be singular is generally to be right in a wicked world, are not very many in this age. Compared even with the Puritan times, where are our divines? Could we marshal together our Howes and our Charnocks? Could we gather together such names as I might mention about 50 at a time? I think not. Nor could we bring together such a galaxy of Grace and talent as that which immediately followed Whitefield. Think of Rowland Hill, Newton, Toplady and numbers of others whom time would fail me to mention! They are gone. Their venerated dust rests in the grave. Where are their successors? Ask where and echo shall reply, "Where?" God has not yet raised them up, or, if He has done so, we have not yet found out where they are.

There is, nowadays, much preaching, but how is it often done? The preacher says, "O Lord, help Your servant to preach and teach him by Your Spirit what to say!" Then out comes the manuscript and he reads it! We have other preaching of this order—it is speaking very beautifully and very finely, possibly eloquently, in a sense—but where is there, now, such preaching as Whitefield's? Have you ever read one of his sermons? You will not think him eloquent—you cannot think so. His expressions were rough and frequently unconnected—there was very much declamation about him, it was a great part, indeed, of his speech—but wherein lay his eloquence? Not in the words he uttered, but in the tones in which he delivered them! In the earnestness with which he spoke them, in the tears which ran down his cheeks and in the pouring out of his very soul! The reason why he was eloquent was just what the word means—he was eloquent because he spoke right out from his heart—he caused the Truth of God to flow out of the innermost depths of his soul. When he spoke, you could see that he meant what he said. He did not speak like a mere machine, but he preached what he felt to be the Truth of God and what he could not help preaching! If you had heard him preach, you could not but help feeling that he was a man who would die if he could not preach—and that with all his might he called to men, "Come to Jesus Christ, and believe on Him."

That kind of preaching is just the lack of these times! Where is earnestness now? It is neither in the pulpit nor yet in the pew in such a measure as we desire it. And it is a sad, sad age when earnestness is scoffed at, and when that very zeal which ought to be the prominent characteristic of the pulpit is regarded as enthusiasm and fanaticism! I pray God to make us all such fanatics as most men laugh at, such enthusiasts as many despise. To my mind, it is the greatest fanaticism in the world to go to Hell—and the worst folly upon earth to love sin better than righteousness! And I think that they are anything but fanatics who seek to obey God rather than man, and to follow Christ in all His ways. To me, one sad proof that the Church needs revival is the absence of that solemn earnestness which was once seen in Christian pulpits.

The absences of sound doctrine is another proof of our need of revival. We can turn back to the records of our Puritan forefathers, to the Articles of the Church of England and to the preaching of Whitefield, and we can say of their doctrine, it is the very thing we love! And the doctrines which were then uttered are—and we dare to say it everywhere—the very same doctrines that we proclaim now! But because we proclaim them, we are thought singular and strange! And the reason is because sound doctrine has, to a great degree, been abandoned! It began in this way. First of all, the Truths of God were fully believed, but the angles of them were taken off a little. The minister believed in election, but he did not use the word for fear it should, in some degree, disturb the equanimity of the deacon in the green pew in the corner. He believed that all were, by nature, depraved, but he did not say so positively, because if he did, there was a lady who had subscribed so much to the Chapel who would not come again! So, while he surely did *believe* it and did preach it in some sense, he rounded it off a little.

Afterwards, it came to this—ministers said, "We believe these doctrines, but we do not think them profitable to preach to the people. They are quite true. Free Grace is true. The great Doctrines of Grace that were preached by Christ, by Paul, by Augustine, by Calvin and down to this age by their successors, are true—but they had better be kept back—they must be very cautiously dealt with. They are very high and dreadful doctrines and they must not be preached! We believe them, but we dare not speak them out." After that, it came to something worse. They said within themselves, "Well, if these doctrines will not do for us to preach, perhaps they are not true, after all." And going one step further, they did not actually say so, perhaps, but they began to hint that they were *not true*—and then they went on to preach something which they said was the truth. And now, if they could, they would cast us out of the synagogue, as if they were the rightful owners of it and we were the intruders! So they have gone from bad to worse. And if you read the standard divinity of this age and the standard divinity of Whitefield's day, you will find that the two cannot, by any possibility, be made to agree together! We have, nowadays, what is called a "new theology." New theology? Why, it is anything *but* a *Theology*—it is an *ology* which has cast out God and enthroned man! It is the doctrine of man—not the doctrine of the everlasting God. Therefore, we need a revival of sound doctrine once more in the midst of the land.

And the Church at large also needs *a revival of downright earnestness in its members.* You are not the men to fight the Lord's battles—you have not the earnestness, the zeal which the children of God once had! Your forefathers were oak men, but you are willow men. Our people, what are they, many of them? Strong in doctrine when they are with strong doctrine men, but they waver when they got with others—and they alter as often as they change their company! They are sometimes one thing and

sometimes another. They are not the men to go to the stake and die for the Truth of God! They are not the men who know how to die daily and so are ready for death whenever it comes.

Look at our Prayer Meetings, with only here and there a bright exception. There are, possibly, six old women present—scarcely ever do enough male members come to pray four times. Prayer Meetings they are called—*spare* meetings they ought to be called, for sparely enough are they attended! And very few there are who go to our Fellowship Meetings, or to any other meetings that we have to help one another in the fear of the Lord. Are they attended at all as they should be? I would like to see a newspaper printed, somewhere, containing a list of all the persons who went to those meetings during the week in any of our Chapels. Ah, my Friends, if they should comprise all the Christians in London, you might find that a very few Chapels would hold them all! We have not earnestness, we have not life as we once had! If we had, we would be called worse names than we are now—we would have viler epithets thrown at us if we were more true to our Master! We should not have all things quite so comfortable if we served God better. We are getting the Church to be an institution of our land—an honorable institution. Some think it a grand thing when the Church becomes an honorable institution, but it shows that the Church has swerved from the right course when she begins to be very honorable in the eyes of the world! She must still be cast out, she must still be called evil and still be despised until that day when her Lord shall honor her because she has honored Him—when He shall honor her, even in this world, in the day of His appearing!

Beloved, do you think it is true that the Church needs reviving? Yes, or no? "No," you say, "at least not to the extent that you suppose. *We* think the Church is in a good condition. We are not among those who cry, 'The former days were better than these.'" Perhaps you are not. You may be far wiser than we are and, therefore, you are able to see those various signs of goodness which are, to us, so small that we are not able to discover them. You may suppose that the Church is in a good condition. If so, of course you cannot sympathize with me in preaching from such a text and urging you to use such a prayer as this, "O Lord, revive Your work." But there are others of you who frequently cry, "The Church needs reviving." Let me bid you, instead of grumbling at your minister, instead of finding fault with the different parts of the Church, to cry, " O Lord, revive Your work." "Oh," says one, "that we had another minister! Oh, that we had another kind of worship! Oh, that we had a different sort of preaching!" Just as if that were all—but my prayer is, "Oh, that the Lord would come into the hearts of the men you have! Oh, that He would make the plans you use to be full of power!" You do not need fresh ways or new machinery—you need *life* in those that you have!

There is an engine on the railway, but the train will not move. "Bring another engine," says one, "and another, and another." The engines are

brought, but the train does not stir. Light the fire and get up steam, that is what you need—not fresh engines! We do not need fresh ministers, or fresh plans, or fresh ways, though many might be invented to make the Church better—we only need life and fire in those we have! With the very man who has emptied your Chapel, the same person that brought your Prayer Meeting low, God can yet make the Chapel to be crowded to the doors and give thousands of souls to that very man! It is not a new man that is needed—it is the life of God in him! Do not be crying out for something new—it will no more succeed, of itself, than what you have! Cry, "O Lord, revive Your work!"

I have noticed, in different churches, that the minister has thought first of this contrivance, then of that. He tried one plan and thought that would succeed. Then he tried another, but that was no good. Keep to the old plan, my Friend, but seek to get life into it! We do not need anything new—"the old is better"—let us keep to it, but we need life in the old. "Oh," men cry, "we have nothing but the shell." And they are going to give us a new shell. No, Sirs, we will keep the old one, but we will have the life in the shell! We will have the old plans, but we must, or else we will throw the old away, have the life in the old! Oh, that God would give us life! The Church needs fresh revivals. Oh, for the days of Cambuslang again, when God's Word was preached with power! Oh, for the days when, in this place, hundreds were converted under Whitefield's sermons! It has been known that 2,000 credible cases of conversion have happened under one solitary sermon! Oh, for the age when eyes would be strained and ears would be ready to receive the Truth of God and when men would drink in the Word of Life, as it is, indeed, the very Water of Life which God gives to dying souls! Oh, for the age of deep feeling—the age of thorough-going earnestness!

Let us ask God for it! Let us plead with Him for it! Perhaps He has the man or the men somewhere who will yet shake the world! Perhaps even now He is about to pour forth a mighty influence upon man which shall make the Church as wonderful in this age as it ever was in any age that has passed. God grant it, for 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.

A VISIT FROM THE LORD
NO. 2599

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 4, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT CHRIST CHURCH, WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD,
(during the renovation of the Tabernacle),
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 30, 1883.

"O visit me with Your salvation."
Psalm 106:4.

THIS is the prayer of a man who understood the art of praise. He begins this Psalm with a Hallelujah. "Praise you the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good." Now, mark, there is no prayer that is purer, more spiritual, more heavenly than the prayer which comes out of a heart full of praise! How often have I said that prayer is the breathing in of the air of Heaven and praise is the breathing of it out again? Prayer and praise make up the best life of the Christian and he is not yet thoroughly in spiritual health who is all for prayer and not at all for praise—but he is the really healthy Christian who has these two things rightly balanced. Such a man one moment cries, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endures forever." And then, directly afterwards, prays, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that You bear unto Your people." Is it not possible, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that you have lost some of your power in prayer because you have somewhat neglected praise? If we do not bless God for the mercies we have received, how can we go and ask Him for more? If we have already been heard in our prayers and yet have failed to acknowledge our obligation to the Giver, do we not come to prayer with a very bad attitude? Might not God say to us, "You did not thank Me the last time I granted your request. Why should I answer you this time?" Let us, therefore, each one, take care that our prayer is the petition of one who can and who does praise the Lord.

Next, observe that this prayer was offered by one who knew the blessedness of the saints. In the third verse he says, "Blessed are they that keep justice and he that does righteousness at all times." I introduce this remark because, to a large extent, the prayer of the text is the prayer of a sinner—the prayer of one who felt that he did not bear the character of a saint as fully as he ought to have done. And, Beloved, if we were more saintly, we would have much more power in prayer and we should be much more happy. If we walked with God more closely, and kept justice, and did righteousness at all times, we would be saved from many of those trials and afflictions and disappointments which now fall to our lot. The Psalmist tells us about what troubles the children of Israel had in the wilderness, but those troubles resulted from their sin. They need not

have had to endure half what they suffered if they had only been right with God. And so, in the later days of their history, they would never have been captives to their enemies if they had not first been captives to their sins. If they had walked as God would have had them walk, their peace would have been like a river—one of them would have chased a thousand—and two would have put ten thousand to flight! There will be, practically, hardly any limit to the blessedness which a child of God may enjoy even in this life if he will but walk carefully with his God.

So, dear Friends, if you and I feel that we have wandered and if our prayer has to be presented "out of the depths," yet I trust that we have not forgotten that there is a peace, a rest, a joy which God bestows upon those who walk uprightly, those who live more carefully than we have done and keep nearer to Him than some of His erring children do.

Now, coming to the text, I want you to notice the prayer itself. I have nothing new to say, but I shall try to utter some very simple Truths of God suggested by the Psalmist's prayer, "O visit me with Your salvation."

I. The first thought is, that the Psalmist here prays for SALVATION.

What a wonderful word that word, "salvation," is! Well might Dr. Watts say—

"Salvation! Let the echo fly
The spacious earth around,"

for there is something in it to be heard by all who dwell on this spacious earth. Salvation is the one thing which all men need, and when it is given to them, it conveys to them innumerable mercies for time and for eternity. Indeed, everything good is wrapped up in that word, *salvation*. As we read this Psalm, you probably noticed how the Psalmist sings concerning salvation in it. He says, first, that *God saved the people out of Egypt.* There they were, a nation of captives and bond slaves—and He began to work with a high hand and an outstretched arm to bring them out of their captivity! And though they did not understand His wonders, yet, nevertheless, He saved them. That is a salvation in which you and I also delight—salvation by the sprinkled blood—salvation by the Paschal Lamb—salvation by the right hand of God and His out-stretched arm—a salvation which reveals His faithfulness, His mercy and His power. Let us bless God if we experimentally know what this salvation means! And if we do not, let this be the prayer of each one of us, "O visit me with Your salvation."

One of the worst results of the Fall is that men who are spiritually dead do not pray for life. But if there is one here who is sufficiently under the influence of the Holy Spirit to know that he needs spiritual life, he may begin at once to pray, "O visit me with Your salvation." If you have not yet felt the burden of sin. If you do not yet savingly know the Sin-Bearer. If you are still a bond slave to your sin, you have, indeed, need to pray this prayer. If you know that you are not what you ought to be and that, living and dying as you now are, you will perish everlastingly, then with all your heart and with as much desire as there may be in you, do breathe the prayer to God, "O visit me with Your salvation."

O poor Heart, as soon as you begin to pray, you begin to live! You may have very little power in prayer. In fact, your prayer may be no better than the first feeble cry of a newborn child, but it is a sign of life and the

Lord hears even a groan! And the tears that fall without a sound are liquid music to Jehovah, for He knows what they mean. May I not hope that somebody here, if he cannot pray spiritually, will yet pray as do the young ravens who, in their nests, when they are hungry, cry, and the Lord hears them and relieves their hunger? If you think that your prayer is no better than the cry of a poor bird, or the roaring of a wild beast, yet still cry, still pray! One trick of the devil is to try to stop you from praying—he will tell you that you will not be heard. But I can assure you that the cry of misery, the sob of inward grief is certain to be heard by the tender and gracious God whom we worship. Somewhere in this building, I think, there must be some heart that has been, up to now, giddy, thoughtless, careless—that will now begin to pray—"O visit me with Your salvation."

Further on in the Psalm, the writer sings of a *second salvation when the people were delivered at the Red Sea.* Its waves rolled before them and they could not tell how they were to escape from Pharaoh who was close behind with all the chariots and horsemen of Egypt pursuing them. Ah, poor timid Israelites! They could almost hear the whips of their taskmasters and they probably feared that something worse would come upon them and that they would feel their oppressors' swords and that their blood would soon be shed! They were in a state of great anxiety and trouble, yet we read just now, "Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake. He rebuked the Red Sea, also, and it was dried up—and He saved them from the hand of him that hated them and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy."

Perhaps I am addressing some who are so fully conscious of their sin that they are driven almost to despair by it. Instead of believing that this awakened conscience of theirs is an evidence of God's Grace, they are afraid that it is a sign of condemnation. The weight of their sin crushes them—they hardly dare hope that there may be a way of escape for them, but, poor Soul, if this is your sad state, I trust that you will be able to pray, "'O visit me with Your salvation.' O God, the Red Sea rolls in front of me, the rocks frown upon me on either hand and my sins pursue me, and seek to slay me. 'O visit me with Your salvation.' Come, and dry up this Red Sea of iniquity! Come and destroy these adversaries of mine and let me sing with the Psalmist, 'And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left.' 'O visit me with Your salvation.'"

You know how it was with Israel—I always delight to dwell upon it—how the Lord brought again the waters of the Red Sea and Pharaoh and all his hosts were swallowed up. And then Miriam took her timbrel and all the women went forth after her and sang unto the Lord who had triumphed gloriously, and thrown the horses and their riders into the sea! And this was one of the most jubilant notes of their song, "The depths have covered them; there is not one of them left." So it was, Beloved, when you and I, having cried to God for mercy, at last found it through Jesus Christ our Savior! Then we saw our sins cast into the depths of the sea and we were ready to dance for joy as we said, "The depths have covered them! There is not one of them left." Our experience ought to be an encouragement to others. Come, despairing Soul, you that are like a

mouse in a hole and hardly dare to pop your head out to look! Never mind about coming out! Stay where you are and there breathe the prayer, "O visit me with Your salvation," and you shall yet come out into light and liberty, and you shall joy and rejoice in God!

It may be that you and I, dear Friends, have gone further on than this. We have been saved from our natural ruin and saved from the power of despair worked in us by conviction—and *now we are fighting with our uprising corruptions.* Our inbred sin is like the deep that lies under and, perhaps, lately, the fountains of the great deep have been broken up within us. We cannot sin without being grieved and troubled by it. It is a vexation even to hear the report of it. Oh, that we could live without sinning at all! Well, now, Beloved, if you are struggling against it, let this be your prayer to the Most High, "O visit me with Your salvation." The Lord is able at once to come into your heart and to put an end to your temptation whatever it may be. Is it unbelief? He can strengthen your faith. Is it covetousness? He can deliver you from that abomination and give you a contented spirit. Is it anger? Oh, how sweetly can He come and fill you with love! Whatever may be the evil against which you are fighting, He can help you overthrow it and you shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved you! I earnestly commend this prayer to every struggling Believer, to everyone who feels the two natures within him striving for the mastery and who is, sometimes, in doubt whether the house of David or the house of Saul will get the victory! Doubt not, my Brothers and Sisters, the Lord is with the true seed. He that quickened you will keep the new life in you—it cannot die, for it is born of God and you shall yet overcome sin and death and Hell! Only forget not to breathe the cry from your very soul, "O visit me with Your salvation," and you shall prove what a salvation it is to be saved from the power of sin.

Our text may also be used in another sense, for salvation means *deliverance from grievous affliction,* just as, in this Psalm, when the children of Israel were brought into great distress by their enemies, God came and saved them from their foes. So, at this time, dear Friend, you may be in great distress. It may be temporal distress, or mental distress, or spiritual distress. Whether you are suffering in body, or in mind, or in heart, God knows how to deliver you. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all." "He that is our God is the God of salvation and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death." If you should ever get so low in spirit that you can only compare yourself with Jonah when the whale went down to the very bottom of the sea and he felt that the earth with her bars was about him forever and he was at the very foundations of the everlasting hills—yet even then the God who brought up Jonah from the depths can bring you up! See how the wheel turns—that spoke which was lowest just now has become the highest! Mark how the stars which shall, tonight, descend, and shall not be seen all day long, shall yet, when night comes round again, climb once more to their zenith and occupy their appointed places! You are not doomed to be down forever! You shall yet mount up again and you may say to the adversary, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy! When I fall, I shall

arise." "The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring My people again from the depths of the sea."

To every tried and troubled one, then, I suggest the prayer of our text, "O visit me with Your salvation," for it points out the way of deliverance for them, whatever their trouble may be, and it specially concerns the all-important matter of salvation!

II. Now let us think for a few minutes upon the second thing which is very manifest in the text, and that is, VISITATION—"O visit me with Your salvation."

You have read in the newspapers of men having "died in the visitation of God." Sometimes, that has been the verdict of the jury at the close of an inquest. But here is a man who *lived* by the visitation of God! And, truly, it is a most blessed thing to know that the very best and truest way of living is to live by being visited by God—visited by His salvation! I admire the wording of this prayer. It does not say, "O save me." That would be a very proper petition. It does not say, "O send me salvation." That, under some aspects, would be proper enough. But the petition is, "Lord, come Yourself and bring the salvation that I need, by Yourself coming to me. 'O visit me with Your salvation.'" What a blessed prayer this is! "O visit me! Lord, visit me!" It takes some faith to pray it, for humility prompts us to say, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof." Yet faith, and a childlike spirit teach us to pray, "Lord, visit me. I hear that You visit Your people. Lord, visit me. I have heard one of them say that you came under his roof and stayed with him all through the night and make him unspeakably glad. 'Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that You bear unto Your people: O visit me'—yes, even me—'with Your salvation.' Though the Heaven of heavens cannot contain You, for You are so great, yet I know that You dwell in every humble and contrite heart. Lord, come and visit me, and dwell within me." I think this is indeed a blessed prayer.

Mark the *condescension* which the Psalmist feels that the Lord will thus manifest. "'O visit me with Your salvation.' Lord, I cannot be saved unless You will visit me. Visit me not as a saved one, but, 'visit me with Your salvation.' I am lost until You come to me. O come, Lord, and visit me as a Savior! Come and visit me as a Physician, for I am sick! Pay me a visit of mercy, a visit of Grace and tenderness. O You great and glorious Lord, I beseech You, come and visit me! By the remembrance of Bethlehem's manger, the horned oxen, the straw and the stable, so ill fitted for Your reception, come and visit me! And, as the angels sang when You thus descended to the lowliest of lowliness, so shall my heart sing yet more sweetly if You will visit me—even me! It will be great condescension on Your part, but, 'O visit me with Your salvation.'"

And it will be *compassion, too.* "'O visit me.' I am a prisoner, yet come, Lord, and visit me. I am lame and very weak. Lord, I have not a leg to carry me to Your House, so, come to my house, Lord. 'O visit me!' My heart is heavy and sorely burdened. My very wishes lag, my prayers limp, my desires halt. O come and visit me! If I cannot come to You, yet come You to me, my God." It seems to me that this is a sweet, sweet prayer for one who is under a sense of inability and whose strength is utterly gone.

"O visit me with Your salvation." In it I see condescension and compassion.

But there is more in it even than that, there is also communion—"O visit me with Your salvation." This means more than a complimentary call such as ladies and gentlemen make when they spend half a day in going around to their friends distributing little bits of cardboard. I believe it is a wonderful token of friendship to do that, but you and I do not move in that artificial region. When we visit anyone, we mean it, and we do not make calls of mere ceremony or custom, but a visit from a beloved friend—oh, what a joy it is! Occasionally I have the opportunity of meeting dear friends who have been asking me to pay them a visit and I can see, by the very way that they receive me, that they are almost as happy as the black men were when Mungo Park went to them! They said that they began to date their existence from the day when the white man came that way. Most of you must have some friends who love you so much that when they see you at their house, they do not need to know when you are going, but, if they could, they would make you always stay there. Dr. Watts went to see Sir Thomas Abney, at Abney Park, to spend a week—but that week lasted through all the rest of his life, for he never went away from there—and he lies buried in Abney Park. And Sir Thomas is buried there, also, so that even in death, the friends are not separated from one another! They never meant to part after they once came together. That is the kind of visit we need from the Lord, so let us breathe this prayer now, "O Lord, come and visit me, but do not merely pay me a brief visit, but come to stay with me."

"That is a bold request," says one, "to ask God to come and abide with us." Listen, listen, listen! There was a certain Church—you know the name of it—Laodicea, of which Christ said that it made Him sick. But what did He say next? "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." That passage is not a call from Christ to sinners, as it is often used—it may, perhaps, be so used by way of illustration. But that is not its first meaning. It is this. Here are some people of God who have fallen so low in Grace that they are neither cold nor hot and Christ prescribes this remedy for their lukewarmness—that He should come and sup with them—that He should come and pay them a visit. Now, if our blessed Lord was willing to visit the Laodiceans who were neither cold nor hot, I am sure that He will come to us who are cold! And He will come to us who are hot—He would rather come to such than to the lukewarm! Let us, then, each one, breathe the prayer, "Come, Lord, and tarry not. Come now and visit me with Your salvation." And when He does come, Brothers and Sisters, let us do as Sir Thomas Abney did with Dr. Watts—let us get Him to protract His visit! He will act as though He would go further, as He did when at Emmaus, but our wisdom will be to say, as the two disciples did, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And when He says, "No, I must go," we must not take His, "No," for an answer, but we must do as they did—"They constrained Him." He will go, if you let Him, but you must not let Him! Perhaps He will say, "Let Me go, for the day breaks," but you

must follow Jacob's example and say, "I will not let You go," and you need not add, "except You bless me," but you may say, "I will not let you go at all! I mean to hold to You on and on and on, by day and night—You shall not leave me." You will be blessed, indeed, if you can pray the prayer of our text in this sense, "O visit me with Your salvation."

III. Now, with great brevity, I turn to a third thing in my text and that is, PERSONALITY—"O visit me with Your salvation." We ought to pray for one another. We must pray for the peace and prosperity of the whole Church of Christ, but there are times when it will be well that all our desire should run in this direction and that we should cry to the Lord, "O visit me with Your salvation."

This petition of the Psalmist shows *great necessity.* It is as if he had said, "Lord, I need You more than any others do, therefore, visit me. Unless you come to me, I shall be a wretch undone forever. 'O visit me with Your salvation.'" It is always unwise to make your necessity appear little. It is so great that you never can exaggerate it—take care that you do not set it in a diminished form! When you come before God, do not try to make yourself out to be a little sinner. You are not likely to make yourself appear more guilty than you are, but your highest wisdom is to state your case to the Lord in all its blackness and its badness—and then to cry to Him, "O visit *me* with Your salvation."

It seems to me that this personality of the prayer also betokens *great unworthiness,* as if the Psalmist felt that the Lord might go and visit others and, perhaps, find some reason for so doing, but, as for him, he must cry, and cry mightily, too, or else he would be passed by, for he felt himself so unworthy. "O Lord, visit me; visit me to save me! If ever a soul needed saving, I am that one. If ever there was a sinner near despair, I am that sinner! Lord, come and visit me with Your salvation!"

The prayer also reveals *great concentration of desire.* "O visit me with Your salvation." It seems to me as if the Psalmist put all his thoughts, all his desires, yes, and his very *life* into that prayer. Let us imitate him in this earnestness and concentration. Where are you, my dear Friend? — for I feel certain that there is somebody present who can pray this prayer. "O visit *me*." If you are growing old, well may you say, "O visit *me*." If you are feeling ill—if the doctor tells you that there is something amiss with that heart of yours—you may well pray, "O visit me." Or do you feel yourself very weak and feeble in spirit? Well, then, do not hesitate to make your prayer, tonight, a personal one—there is nothing selfish in crying with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" If anybody says that it is selfish to pray for yourself so much, just ask him what he would do if he were drowning? Does anybody say that it is selfish for him to strike out and try to swim, or selfish to seize the lifebuoy that is thrown to him? If you were in a fire and likely to be burned to death, would anybody call you selfish because you looked for the fire escape and climbed on it as soon as it touched your window?

And when your very soul is in danger, it is a hallowed selfishness to seek, first, its salvation! If your own soul is lost, what can you do for the salvation of other people? If you perish, what benefit can you be to your fellow men? Truly, this is a holy charity which ought to begin at home

and I do not believe that any man really cares for the souls of others who does not first and foremost care about his own soul! If you do not pray, "O visit me with Your salvation," I am sure that you do not pray, "O visit my wife with Your salvation. O visit my children with Your salvation." Therefore, keep to this personal prayer till it is answered! And when it is, then pray for all others as earnestly as you have prayed for yourself!

IV. And now to finish. Notice one thing more in this text and that is, A SPECIALTY—"O visit me with Your salvation"—the kind of salvation he has been describing in this Psalm—the salvation worked by Omnipotent Grace, the salvation of enduring love!

Dear Friends, I have heard of a good many so-called salvations in my time. I heard, some time ago, of a woman who said that she had been saved already six times and it had not done her much good. She had been to different revival meetings and joined various societies that make a great row—and call it salvation—and in that way she had been "saved" six times and she did not know that she was any better. No, and you may be "saved" in such a fashion as that six thousand times and be none the better, for that is not God's salvation!

The Psalmist prayed, "O visit me with Your salvation," and by that he meant *real salvation,* a radical change, a thorough work of Grace. God's salvation includes a perfect cleansing in the precious blood of Jesus, a supernatural work in renewing the heart, a resurrection work in raising the dead and giving a new life. So, when you pray, "O visit me with Your salvation," you ask the Lord to give you real salvation, not a sham.

This salvation is also *compete salvation.* It saves the man from the love of sin. It not merely saves him from getting drunk, from lying, from thieving and from uncleanness, but it saves him within as well as without. It is a thorough renewal—a work of Grace that takes effect upon every part of his nature. God grant that you and I may never be content with a salvation which is not the work of Divine Grace! You remember that it is said of Mr. Rowland Hill that he was met, somewhere about the New Cut, by a drunk who reeled up to him and said, "Well, Mr. Hill, I am glad to see you, Sir. I am one of your converts." "Yes," replied the good minister, "you may be one of my converts. If you had been one of the Lord's converts, you would not be drunk." There are too many of *our* converts about—we may find them everywhere except in Heaven! But woe unto the man who is content with being the convert of his fellow man! What we need is a visitation from God, Himself, and therefore, we pray with the Psalmist, "O visit me with Your salvation."

Lastly, and chiefly, God's salvation is *eternal salvation.* We hear, in various quarters, from time to time, about a salvation that is only temporary. I have been told, again and again, of men who are said to have been children of God one day, and children of the devil the next. Now, I believe that a temporary salvation is a trumpery salvation and that it is neither worth preaching nor receiving. But God's salvation is both worth preaching and receiving because it is everlasting salvation. A good old divine was once asked whether he believed in the final perseverance of the saints. "Well," said he, "I do not know much about that matter, but I firmly believe in the final perseverance of God, that where He has begun

a good work He will carry it on until it is complete." To my mind, that Truth of God includes the final perseverance of the saints—they persevere in the way of salvation because God keeps them in it. Does the Holy Spirit renew the heart of a man and then is His work, after all, undone, so that the man goes back to his unregenerate state? What is to become of him then?

"Oh!" says someone, "he may be born again." What? A man to be born again, and again, and again? Is there anything in the Bible to warrant such teaching as that? I believe not! If the Holy Spirit's work in renewing the heart could ever be undone, then this text would come in, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance"—for God's greatest work has been already worked upon them and if it could fail, nothing more could be done for them. "But, Beloved," says the Apostle, after making this solemn declaration, "we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." So, dear Friends, if the Lord saves you, you are saved forever! If He has worked within you a work of Grace, it will assuredly end in Glory—

"All necessary Grace will God bestow,
And crown that Grace with Glory, too!
He gives us all things and withholds
No real good from upright souls."

"Lord, visit me with Your salvation." Others may have their own salvation of any sort or kind that they please, but do visit me with *Your* salvation! Take my case in Your hands, then the work will be done, well done, and done forever." Pray thus, dear Friend, for yourself. "O visit *me* with *Your* salvation," and He will do so. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." God lead you all to accept His great salvation even now, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 106.

This Psalm relates the story of God's mercy to Israel, of the people's provocation of Jehovah, and of His great patience with them, It commences with an exhortation to praise the Lord.

Verse 1. *Praise you Jehovah.* Or, "Hallelujah." I cannot help remarking, here, that this is one of the most sacred words in the whole Bible and it ought always to be pronounced with the utmost reverence. I sometimes feel my blood chill when I hear of "hallelujah lasses" and, "hallelujah bonnets." If those who use such expressions rightly understood the meaning of the word, they would not thus take the name of the Lord in vain!

1. *O give thanks unto Jehovah; for He is good: for His mercy endures forever.* As long as you and I are sinners, this will be one of the sweetest notes in our song of thanksgiving unto Jehovah—"His mercy endures forever."

2. *Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? Who can show forth all His praise?* Neither the angels nor the perfect spirits who day without night circle His throne rejoicing can show forth all Jehovah's praise.

3. *Blessed are they that keep justice, and he that does righteousness at all times.* There is great comfort in walking near to God. The way of peace, the way of blessing is the way of righteousness, but, alas, my Brothers and Sisters, we do not always keep in that way as we should. The Psalmist himself felt that he did not, therefore he prayed—

4. *Remember me, O LORD, with the favor that You bear unto Your people: O visit me with Your salvation.* He felt that he needed God's Grace in all its saving power.

5. *That I may see the good of Your chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, that I may glory with Your inheritance.* He longs to get in among the people of God. He wants to share the favor which God bestows upon them—the Free Grace which He manifests to them. He wants to be included in their election, to rejoice in their gladness and to glory in their inheritance.

6, 7. *We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have dose wickedly. Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt.* Very great wonders were worked there when God's time came to set His people free from their cruel bondage. There was a marvelous display of power on God's part, yet the Psalmist had to say, "Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt."

7. *They remembered not the multitude of Your mercies; but provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.* They had hardly started out of Egypt before they provoked Jehovah. They had only just caught sight of the rolling waters of the Red Sea when they began to murmur against God and against His servant, Moses.

8. *Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake.* Oh, is not that a grand word? Well might Jehovah say, "Not for Your sakes do I this, O house of Israel." He saved them for His own sake.

8. *That He might make His mighty power to be known.* Free Grace finds in itself, not in us, its own motive, and discovers its own reason for acting on our behalf. God's reason for mercy is found in His mercy.

9-13. *He rebuked the Red Sea, also, and it was dried up: so He led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. And He saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. Then believed they His words; they sang His praise. They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel.* Ah, me! Even the divided sea is soon forgotten! Enemies walled up by water speedily pass from remembrance. "They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel."

14, 15. *But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.* I do not know of anything more dreadful than that—to be fattened outside and to be starved within—to have everything that heart could wish for and yet not to have the best thing that the heart ought to wish

for! May God save us from that appearance of prosperity which is only a veiled desolation!

16. *They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD.* These two men had done everything for the children of Israel. They had been the instruments in the hand of God of innumerable blessings to them, yet they envied Moses and Aaron.

17, 18. *The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked.* Jehovah's mercy did not melt the people's hard hearts, so perhaps the fear of His judgment would. God tried both methods with them, as He has done with us, for sometimes He has been very gracious to us and at other times He has chastened us very sorely. He has tried the kiss and He has tried the blow. Yet what happened in the case of Israel?

19-22. *They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eats grass. They forgot God their Savior, which had done great things in Egypt; wondrous works in the land of Ham and terrible things by the Red Sea.* What was to become of such a people, provoking Him again and again?

23. *Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses, His chosen, stood before Him in the breach to turn away His wrath, lest He should destroy them.* How often has our blessed Mediator, who is far greater than Moses, stood before the Lord in the breach! How often has the great Husbandman said, concerning the fruitless tree, "Cut it down; why cumbers it the ground?" And then that Divine Dresser of the vineyard has pleaded, "Let it alone this year, also, till I shall dig about it." And here we are, still spared and still blessed through the intercession of God's chosen Mediator.

24. *Yes, they despised the pleasant land.* They said that the Canaan towards which they were traveling was not worth the trouble of getting to it—"They despised the pleasant land."

24-28. *They believed not His Word: but murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD. Therefore He lifted up His hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: to overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. They joined themselves also unto Baal-Peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.* They began to study necromancy and spiritualism and to join in the abominations of the worship of Baal.

29. *Thus they provoked Him to anger with their inventions: and the plague broke in upon them.* Now notice how something always happened to spare them from the destruction which they deserved.

30, 31. *Then stood up Phinehas and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations forevermore.* Yet they still went on sinning against the Most High.

32, 33. *They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: because they provoked his spirit, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips.* Does it not seem remarkable that Moses, the true servant of God, was not spared from punishment when it was

but a word that He spoke unadvisedly, yet still the mercy of God was continued to that provoking generation? Ah, that is always the way with our jealous God—those whom He loves best will be sure to feel His chastising rod, whatever happens to others. At last the Israelites reached Canaan—they entered into the land that flowed with milk and honey! Did that change their character? No, not in the least.

34-38. *They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them: but were mingled among the heathen and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yes, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.* Just think how low they had sunk! God's own people had come down to this—that they actually offered their own children in sacrifice to Moloch!

39-43. *Thus were they defiled with their own works and went a whoring with their own inventions. Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against His people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. Many times did He deliver them.* You would not have expected to find such a sentence as that, here, yet there it stands! Notwithstanding all that these people did, "many times did He deliver them."

43-45. *But they provoked Him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless He regarded their affliction when He heard their cry: and He remembered His Covenant with them and repented according to the multitude of His mercies.* Was there ever so strange a story as this—a story of provocation continued almost beyond belief, and yet of mercy which would not be overcome—of persevering love that would not turn aside?

46-48. *He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto Your holy name, and to triumph in Your praise. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise you the LORD.* So the Psalm ends upon its keynote—"Hallelujah"—"Praise You Jehovah."

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A STRANGE YET GRACIOUS CHOICE
NO. 2600

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 11, 1898.

BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
(on its re-opening after repairs),
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 6, 1883.

"For the LORD has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure."
Psalm 135:4.

This is a Psalm of praise all through. It is to be sung to the high-sounding cymbals. There is not a low note anywhere—it is all robust, exhilarating, joyful! It is "Hallelujah!" from beginning to end and it did not seem possible to the Psalmist that he could omit from it the high jubilant note of election, for if there is anything that makes Believers' hearts sing unto the Lord, it is the recollection that He has chosen them and fixed His love upon them! "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you," is one of the best reasons in the world why we should adore the Lord with all our heart and mind and soul and strength! If the Lord has made us to be His people, we will, indeed, with joy and gladness declare Him to be our God! If He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, we will make such return to Him as we can, and bless Him with our loudest and sweetest music. Blessed be the Lord because He "has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure."

It may be said that this verse relates to the seed of Abraham. So it does, but please remember that everything which belonged to the seed of Abraham after the flesh belongs yet more to those who are the seed of Abraham according to the spirit! Indeed, there always was a peculiar blessing which never came to those who were only born according to the flesh, for Ishmael received it not, neither did Esau enter into it. The line of inheritance is the line of promise, the line of the Divine choice, and if you and I have believed in Jesus Christ, we are in that spiritual line! The mark of that line is *faith*—they that believe are of the seed of believing Abraham. His very name is "the father of the faithful" and those that are full of faith—the faithful—are the true seed of Abraham. The Covenant in its highest and best meaning is theirs—it was made with Abraham on their account. Therefore we shall take all there is in this verse to ourselves if we are, indeed, God's covenanted ones! If He has brought us into the bond of the Covenant by a work of Grace upon our hearts, and we are now one with that glorious promised Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is true of us and of all who are like us in this respect—"The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure."

I. The first thing which lies upon the very surface of our text is THE CHOICE—"The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself."

This choice is a *Divine* one. It is the Lord that has chosen Jacob, that very Lord who made the heavens and the earth! Jehovah, in whose hands are all things. He has made the choice and it is a very wonderful thing, though we speak of it as if it were a commonplace Truth of God. Yet, if we dive into its depths, we shall see that it is truly marvelous that God should ever have chosen any of the fallen race of mankind! He once regretted that He had made men upon the face of the earth, so sinful had they become, yet, knowing beforehand all about their wickedness, the Lord was pleased to make a choice of men. He might have chosen angels, but let it always stand as a wonderful instance of His mysterious Sovereignty that He did not choose the fallen angels—no, not even one of them! Our Lord Jesus Christ "took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham."

Why was it that all the hosts of spiritual beings that fell with Lucifer are left in their fallen state without any hope of salvation, while God's eternal election has fallen upon the sons of men? Why, indeed! We can never understand it and can give no answer but this, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." The choice, however, was Divine, and let us not get away from that glorious Truth of God. It will give you, Believer, the highest joy to know that the Lord has chosen you—and that knowledge will be to you a source of great strength. It will also be one of the best rebukes to the devil. You remember how, when Joshua, the High Priest, was standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan was standing at his right hand to resist him, the Lord said to the accuser, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan; even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" There is no slap in the face for the devil that is so painful to him as that declaration, "The Lord has chosen Jerusalem; He has elected His people and you, O Satan, may do what you will, but you cannot change the choice of God! If He has chosen anyone, that man is of the conquering Seed before whom you have begun to fall, as Haman fell before Mordecai. But you shall fall yet lower, for the Lord has promised to the godly that He will bruise Satan under their feet shortly." God has chosen them! It is He that says it and, therefore, let the full force of the blessed Truth of God come to each believing heart, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." There is an infinite sweetness in that thought!

The choice, being Divine, is also *sovereign.* About this point, we are not left to speculation, for Paul has told us that "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 to their mother Rebecca, "The elder shall serve the younger." The Divine purpose was made in that case irrespective of character, for no character had been developed! If anyone says that it was made on account of character foreseen, I reply that there was no good character to foresee, but as far as Jacob is concerned, although Grace did make him into a true Patriarch and heir of the promise, yet by nature he was a very

poor stick. As I read what he does, when his human nature is uppermost, I feel that there is nothing in him why any mortal man should choose him, and certainly there is no reason why God should do so! There is nothing foreseen about him except that God foresees that He will *make* him gracious—but that is not the *reason* why He makes him gracious!

There is, at the back of it all, the reason that the Lord gave to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." I find such a stuttering and stammering about this great Truth of God in these days that I mean to be all the more emphatic in preaching it, for I believe that this doctrine largely helps in producing that state of spirit into which God would have sinners brought so as to make them feel that they have no claim upon Him—no right to His mercy and that, if He gives it, He gives it simply because He chooses to give it! The choice was made by that great King who has a right to do as He wills and who exercises that right and, therefore, the declaration stands in our text, "Jehovah has chosen Jacob unto Himself."

So we have seen that the choice is Divine and sovereign.

And, Beloved, it is a most *gracious* choice. As I have already said, the more we look at the character of Jacob, the more we must discard all idea that he was chosen for what he was by nature. From his birth, he bore the name of a supplanter and his brother, Esau, bitterly said, "Is not he rightly named Jacob (that is, a supplanter)? For he has supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright and, behold, now he has taken away my blessing." The expression really is in the original, "Is not he rightly named Jacob? For he has Jacobed me these two times." He had supplanted his brother—put him out of his proper place. He was truly the father of all the Jews and, though I will say nothing to their disparagement, yet at driving a bargain are they not the masters of us all? And such was Jacob from the very beginning! So, as God chose him, assuredly He chose him of His Grace and for no other reason than because He would do it. Election was not of works, certainly, in Jacob's case, but of Grace and of Grace alone!

And, putting all things together, was it not *a very wonderful thing* that the Lord should choose Jacob? There were other men upon the face of the earth of whom God might have made a nation and from whom He might have formed the chosen Seed. I do not suppose that even after Abraham and Isaac had come to know the Lord, they were the only people in the world who knew Him. Doubtless, there were some scattered up and down, like Job, who, I should think, is but a sample of many others. It seems to me that if we had been about to choose a man who should found a race, we should have said, "There, Job is the man! 'Perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.'" He was a right princely man—I sometimes think that he was the grandest of all men, when I see him sitting on a dunghill, transforming it into a throne and reigning there right royally, while he says—"The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." It was a noble saying

of the man who cannot be said to be less than the very greatest of mankind! "You have heard of the patience of Job," and all the world shall hear of it again and again while there are ears to hear and tongues to speak! And yet, though Job is chosen unto salvation, he is not the founder of a great race—it is not in his line that the promised Messiah is to be found, but—"the Lord has chosen Jacob."

Ah, me, why did He do it? When you have told me why He chose Jacob, I shall then try to find out why He chose me! And if I should find that out, probably you will, at the same time, discover why He chose you. It is all a great mystery of Grace and must be left with Him who does as He wills—not without reasons, mark you—but without reasons that are revealed to us. God never acts unreasonably, yet He does not find His reasons for acting in men, but within Himself, in the heart of His compassion, in the eternal counsels of His own will. Do not think that we are talking of God as we speak of men. A man, who has a strong will, and who carries it out as he pleases, is a very dangerous person. A despot, let him be ever so gentle, is a terrible being! But God—the infinitely Holy, the perfectly Just, the supremely Good—we may well leave everything with Him. It is not merely that we *must do so,* but it is the best and wisest course for us! Even if we could "snatch from His hands the balance and the rod," into what other hands could we put them? No, they must remain with Him, and we are glad it is so. To me the unlimited dominion of God is glorious. I want to have no constitutional monarchy upon the Throne of Heaven. No, let Jehovah do absolutely as He wills, for His will must be perfect justice, perfect goodness, perfect righteousness!

So we leave this first point, the choice—"The Lord has chosen Jacob."

II. The second part of our subject is full of practical teaching, for it concerns THE REASON OR RESULT OF GOD'S CHOICE.

There are many persons who like to hear about God having chosen Jacob, but listen, dear Friends, to the next words in our text. "The Lord has chosen Jacob *unto Himself."* It does not say, "unto Heaven"—"unto certain privileges"—"unto certain favors." All that is quite true, but it does not say so here. "The Lord has chosen Jacob *unto Himself."* Oh, what a blessed choice is this—to be chosen unto God! Then Jacob is not his own, for God has chosen him, "unto Himself." Then Jacob does not belong to any man, for the Lord has chosen him, "unto Himself." Now Jacob must have no motives except such as he finds in God. He must have no aims for which he is to live but that he may glorify his God, for "the Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself." So, my Brothers and Sisters, if you are chosen by the Lord, you are chosen to be God's child, picked out from the rest of mankind to be, from henceforth, no longer your own, or the world's, or the devil's, but to be God's—and God's alone!

"The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself," first, *that Jacob might know Him.* While others knew not God, but paid reverence unto those that were not gods, Jacob was chosen that he might, while he slept at Bethel, see the mystic ladder by which he might climb to his God—and down which God might send the angels to him. Jacob must be taught about God and Jacob's seed must have committed unto them the oracles

of God. The world lies in darkness, but there is a lamp in the house of Jacob. It is black midnight over Assyria, Babylon and Egypt, but a star shines in the heavens for Jacob and his seed! O dear Hearts, do you understand the great mysteries of which I am speaking? Do you know the Lord—the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit? Have you been taught of God? Are you among those to whom your neighbor need not say, "Know the Lord," because you belong to the people of God who all know Him from the least even to the greatest? If so, happy, indeed, are you!

And, next, the Lord chose Jacob and his seed *that they might keep His Truth afire in the world*—that God's Revelation of Himself might be preserved by them against all comers. It is just so with Christians now—the Lord has put us in trust with the Gospel. He has committed to His servants that wonderful treasure which we have "in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Still are we bound to earnestly "contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." And it is as much the duty of God's people this day to guard His Truth as it was the duty of the seed of Israel to preserve, in the midst of heathen darkness, what was known of the one living and true God. "The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself" that he may preserve His Truth among the sons of men.

It was also committed to Jacob's descendants to keep up the worship of God. They must offer the morning and the evening lamb. They must bring the bullocks and goats and birds for sacrifice. They must set up the Tabernacle in the wilderness. They must build the Temple and there the praises of Jehovah must be sung by sweet songsters day and night. Nowhere else was God to be publicly worshipped with rites ordained by Himself except upon Mount Zion. And now, today, the pure worship of Jehovah is entrusted to His saints—nobody else can worship Him in spirit and in truth but those who have been quickened and made true by the Holy Spirit. There is no true worship of God under Heaven except that which is rendered by His own people. Men may make their ceremonies as gorgeous as they please, with splendor of architecture and great show of millinery, with the sound of flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music—but, after all, there is no true worship except that which comes from hearts in which the Spirit of God dwells! So you see, dear Friends, that the maintenance of God's worship in the world is still entrusted to His chosen.

And the Lord has chosen His people unto Himself *that He may manifest His Grace in them.* "In Judah is God known: His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle and His dwelling place in Zion. There broke He the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle." And it is in the midst of God's own people that His Grace is still revealed. There He breaks the arrows of sin and there He scatters all the battalions of evil. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined" and still, out of the hearts of His chosen people, out of the congregation of His faithful ones, does He shine forth, for the Lord is always with those who are on His side, even with the humble hearts in which He deigns to dwell. But He is not with the ungodly, for they are far from Him by

wicked works. Remember then, you who are chosen, that God has chosen you "unto Himself" that He may manifest His Grace in you.

And, especially God has chosen His people *that He may commune with them,* that He may manifest Himself to them as He does not unto the world—that they may come near unto Him in Christ Jesus and that He may lay bare the very secret of His heart to them. Here is a text to prove my assertion—"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His Covenant." He makes His glory to pass before them and to them He reveals His choicest secrets. Happy and blessed are the people of whom this sentence is true, "The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself."

Now, dear Friends, let the question go round among you—Am I one of the chosen seed? You can tell whether you are chosen of God by this test—Have you been chosen unto God? Can you say with Paul, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus"? Are you the branded slaves of Jesus Christ and yet His free men rejoicing in the liberty wherewith He makes His people free? Do you feel as if you were shut up to one course in life, so that you can say with Paul, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"? Are you torn away from all former ambitions? Have you a single eye unto God's Glory? Does your heart beat for this one objective—that you may live because Christ lives in you? Then the text describes you! "The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself." Oh, what a thrill of delight these words may cause to pass through many, even of those who think they have known the Lord for years!

Come, my Heart, it is all very well for your lips to have sung about God's everlasting love, but have you been brought into communion and fellowship with Him? Do you feel and know that you are, indeed, the Lord's? I fear that there are some who profess and call themselves Christians who live unto God in a very unsatisfactory, secondary sort of way. Like a man I have heard of who had a large farm and then took another, which he called his "off-hand farm." And there are some professors who have their business farm, or their pleasure farm, which is the chief matter with them—and their religion is a kind of an off-hand farm and, sometimes, they think they will get a minister or a "priest" to be the bailiff, and see to it. My Friend, I give you due notice that I will be no bailiff of such a farm! And I also warn you that you will never get anything worth having unless it is your home farm and you make it the main concern of your life! God will never be put in second place—He must be everything or He will be nothing! "The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself."

O my dear Friend, is it so with you? Or are you still living as if there were no God, or as if God did not demand your heart's full allegiance?

III. Now I will pass on to notice, very briefly, in the third place, THE SEPARATION WHICH GROWS OUT OF THIS CHOICE. "The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure."

Then, *He separates His people from the rest of mankind.* Though this is not expressed in the words of the text, it is the true sense of it. And the

Lord has done so. He did so with Jacob—with Israel. He made a Covenant with them and a Covenant with God always means separation from men. What a wonderful condition for a soul to be in—to be in Covenant with God and that Covenant to run on these lines—"I will never leave you nor forsake you." "A new heart also will I give you, and a now spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them. And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be My people, and I will be your God." That Covenant makes a clear division between the two seeds—the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent—it is one of the grandest distinctions between man and man. If you are in the Covenant, Beloved, you are on the right side of that happy and blessed line of demarcation!

Then, after the Covenant with Jacob and Israel, came *the Covenant heritage* which made another division, for the Lord gave the land of Canaan to the seed of Abraham and to the seed of Israel by a Covenant of salt. And God has given to His spiritual Israel a Covenant heritage—we are to possess all things in Christ, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"—everything we can desire, for all things are ours if we are Christ's. Ours is a glorious inheritance! We have everything that is necessary for this life and also for the life to come. Even Canaan had its drawbacks, but we go to a land which in very deed flows with milk and honey, where the sun goes no more down, where there is no death, neither sorrow, nor sighing, a sweet land beyond the flood, the heavenly Canaan which stands forever dressed in living green! Blessed are the eyes that can look from the top of Pisgah and "view the landscape over." But what a difference it makes between man and man that this one has a Covenant heritage and the other has none, for he sold it for a mess of pottage, and has nothing more to do with it!

Then came the broad distinction which all could see, namely, that of *redemption,* for the seed of Jacob had to be redeemed. They had come into bondage in Egypt, but with a high hand and an outstretched arm did the Lord bring them from there. Then the difference began to be visible. That night when the blood-mark was on the lintel and down the two side posts, Israel was distinct from Egypt. The blood had made the difference, for the Lord had said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." O dear Hearers, have you had the blood-mark put upon you? Has the atoning Sacrifice of Christ been laid home to your heart and conscience? This is the great distinction between man and man—the blood that makes atonement for the soul! The Lord has, indeed, manifested His choice of us when we have entered into the fullness of His great redemption!

Then came the going out of Egypt which may be likened to *conversion.* The passage through the Red Sea, which sets forth *regeneration.* The dwelling in the wilderness which is a type of *the life and experience of many Believers.* The passing of the Jordan and the entering into Canaan

which should be a picture of *the joy of all who believe in Jesus,* for "we which have believed do enter into rest" and come into the land of promise. These things, which I have only mentioned in passing, made very grave distinctions between the people of Jehovah and all other nations who looked upon them as a strange race dwelling alone and not numbered among the ordinary nations of the earth.

This brings me again to the critical question—Has the Lord made any difference between you and the rest of mankind, dear Hearers? Have you received any pledge of the Covenant of Grace? Do you know what redeeming love means? Have you been separated from the world? Have you heard the voice of God crying to you, "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing. And I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty"? Is the world a wilderness to you? Have you looked to the bronze serpent and lived by the sight? Does the water from the Rock follow you—that Rock which is Christ? Do you feed on heavenly manna? Is the Lord in the midst of your camp? Is His Glory manifested there? Do you delight to be led by His fiery cloudy pillar from day to day? All this will be the manifestation of the eternal separation which God made in His predestinating purpose—"The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself." He led Israel out into the wilderness that there He might speak to their hearts. He drew them away from men. He made them live solitary and alone, like eagles on the rock, that they might dwell there with Him and have no strange god among them. Blessed are the people who enjoy this separation! But unhappy are the men and women who talk about election and yet have never known the separation which stamps their election as being a matter of fact.

IV. Now I close with one more characteristic of the people of God, and that is, THEIR ELEVATION. This is clearly in the text, "The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself." But He elevates Jacob in a moment, for He adds, "and Israel for His peculiar treasure."

The "supplanter" has grown into a prevailing prince. He took his brother by the heel but now he has accomplished a grander feat than that—he has grasped the Angel and he has said, "I will not let You go, except You bless me." He supplanted Esau, but now, as a prince, he has prevailed with God and seen Him face to face—and yet he has lived! And though he goes limping away from the wrestling, yet is he more than conqueror through Him that loved him! Yes, Beloved, God's choice wonderfully elevates a man! He may have been Jacob, before, but he becomes Israel afterwards! Has such an elevation as that taken place in *you,* my Friend?

Then see, next, that *God elevated His choice in value,* for He compares Jacob to a "peculiar treasure." "Since you were precious in My sight"—oh, that is a wonderful word!—"precious in My sight," to be used by the God who says, "The silver and the gold are Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." "Since you were precious in *My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you.*" They are put to an honorable use, for the choicest treasures of kings, that make up their regalia, are meant to

be brought out on coronation days and on other grand occasions when they bedeck themselves with all their pearls and diamonds and stars and crowns. And such are the Lord's people, precious in His sight, "His peculiar treasure." And they are put to this use—to adorn His doctrine in all things—to be as the jewels of His crown—to be as the signet ring upon His finger—to be as precious stones upon His breastplate! God's people are everything to Him! There is nothing that you have, that you account rich or rare, that is anything to you in value in comparison with what God's people are to Him! His delight is in them—the pleasure which God has in His people is truly wonderful. He made the heavens and the earth, the stars and all things that are—and then He touched the world with His wondrous finger and molded it into the thing of beauty which it is today! And it took Him six days to do it and when He had done it, what happened? "The morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

But did God sing? No, He simply said, in plain prose, that it was very good. That is all He had to say about it. Ah, but when the time comes for the *new* creation, when He makes a true Believer, when He forms His Church, the bride, the Lamb's wife, we read, "He will rejoice over you with joy. He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." Think of God, the Everlasting Father, the Ever-Blessed Son, and the Divine Spirit bursting out into singing! What a song must that be! I would like to hear the singing of the angels and of all the host redeemed with blood that stand in their white robes before the Throne of the Most High. It must be such a song as mortal ears as yet have never heard. But, oh, to hear *God* sing—the great Father, Himself with His holy hymn—the glorious Son with His sweet Psalms—the Holy Spirit with His blessed song! We can scarcely imagine what it must be, but the expression shows how precious the Church must be to the Lord when He is said to rejoice over her with singing!

As the love of a husband to his bride, such is the love of Christ to His people. Otherwise the Song of Solomon means nothing at all and is an idle book. As the love of a tender mother—and what can excel that?—such is the love of God to His people! Like as a mother comforts her children, even so shall the Lord God comfort you. So, then, you see, dear Friends, that the choice of God has lifted His people right up from all their former degradation and made them precious in His sight, so that He, Himself, takes delight in them.

Go home, then, and take delight in God. If He can and delight in you, much more may you delight in Him! And, as the Psalm from which our text is taken begins with, "Praise you the Lord," so now, you who know that you are chosen by Him, praise Him! And as the Psalm ends with, "Praise you the Lord," you who love Him, you who have been loved by Him, continue to praise Him even till your last breath—gasp out a "Hallelujah!" as you pass into eternity!

The Lord be with you, Beloved, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

PSALM 135.

Verse 1. *Praise you the LORD.* Or, "Hallelujah." "Hallelujah" is the keynote of it. So this is one of the Hallelujah Psalms, for so it begins. And if you look at the end, you will see that so it closes. There is, "Hallelujah," again. The whole Psalm is shut in at the beginning and at the end with this which is both our duty and our delight! "Praise you the Lord."

1. *Praise you the name of the LORD.* The Character, the work, all that is revealed of God is a subject for praise. And especially that wonderful and incommunicable name, Jehovah—never mention it without praise! "Praise you the name of the Lord."

1. *Praise Him, O you servants of the LORD.* Make it a part of your service. Praise Him because you are His servants. Praise Him because He accepts your service. You ought to be first in sounding His praises, therefore, "Praise Him, O you servants of the Lord."

2. *You that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God.* You are permitted to dwell near Him. You have a standing and an abode, an office and a work in the courts of the Lord's house. Therefore take care that you begin the strain. Should not the King's courtiers praise Him? Praise Him, then, "you that stand in the courts of the house of our God."

3. *Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good.* There is one excellent reason for praising Him and you can never praise Him too much. He is so good that you can never extol Him to an exaggeration.

3. *Sing praises unto His name; for it is pleasant.* That is, singing God's praises is pleasant—it is a pleasant duty and the Lord's name is pleasant, or lovely. The very thought of God brings the sweetest emotions to every renewed heart. There is no pleasure in the world that exceeds that of devotion. As we sing praises unto the Lord, we shake off the cares of the world, we rise above its smoke and mists and we get, then, the clearer atmosphere of communion with Him.

4. *For the LORD has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure.* There is something for you who are the Lord's chosen to sing about—

"In songs of sublime adoration and praise,
You pilgrims to Zion who press,
Break forth and extol the great
Ancient of Days, His rich and distinguishing Grace."

5. *For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods.* "I know it," says the writer of the Psalm. "I know it by experience. I know it by observation. I am sure of it. There is no god like our God. He is a great Creator, a great Preserver, a great Redeemer, a great Friend, a great Helper. 'I know that Jehovah is great, and that our Adonai is above all gods.'"

6. *Whatever the LORD pleased, that He did in Heaven and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.* The heathen divided out the universe into provinces—they had Jupiter to rule Heaven and earth, and Neptune for the sea, and even today many sing, but, oh, how inaccurately, "Britannia rules the waves." It is Jehovah and no one else that rules the waves! And

the people on either land or sea! He is Lord everywhere and whatever He pleases to do is done! He is no lackey to wait upon the free will of His creatures—"Whatever Jehovah pleased, that He did."

7. *He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth.* That is a very wonderful work! What millions of tons of water are every day turned into vapor and caused to ascend from different regions of the earth to fall, again, in cheerful, refreshing rain! What would we do if this process were suspended? It is the very life-blood of the world.

7. *He makes lightning for the rain.* It is said that the Bible was written to teach us religion, not science. That is very true, but the Bible never makes a mistake in its science—and I would rather agree with the old writers who held that the Bible contained all science than go with those who blasphemously pretend to correct the Holy Spirit and to set Him right upon geology and I know not what besides. In the long run, it shall be proven that the old Book beats all the scientists! And when they have made some wonderful discovery, it will turn out that it was all recorded here long before. "He makes lightning for the rain." There is an intimate connection between electricity and the formation of rain—in the East this is very clear, for we are constantly reading in books of travel of heavy downpours of rain almost always accompanied by thunderstorms.

7. *He brings the wind out of His treasuries.* The wind never comes puffing around us according to some freak of its own, but, "He brings the wind out of His treasuries," counting and spending it as men do their money, not suffering more wind to blow than is needed for the high purposes of His wise government. Let praise for this be given to the God of Nature who is ruling over all and always doing as He wills! The Psalmist goes on to show that the God of Nature is also the God of His people.

8. *Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast.* It was God's own hand that did it. The firstborn of man and beast could not have died by accident all over the land of Egypt at the same hour of the night! Jehovah thus punished the guilty nation. Had they not oppressed His firstborn? Had they not cruelly trampled on His people and refused to listen to His Word? And when the time came for this last and heaviest blow, the Lord did but act in justice to them, and in mercy to His people.

9. *Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of you, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.* "Tokens and wonders"—not only prodigies which astounded the people, but, "tokens," which taught them, for the plagues were directed against their deities—and large books might be written to show how every plague exposed the impotence of some one or other of the false gods which the Egyptians worshipped! Pharaoh and his servants were all involved in the sin, *so* they were all included in the punishment. How much better was it to be a servant of Jehovah than to be a servant of Pharaoh!

10. *Who smote great nations and slew mighty kings.* Two of them are mentioned, perhaps because they were two of the most powerful kings who blocked the road of Israel.

11-13. *Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan: and gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto*

Israel His people. Your name, O LORD, endures forever. He is the same Jehovah now as He ever was. Multitudes of people, nowadays, have made unto themselves new gods—they have imagined a new character for Jehovah altogether, and the God of the Old Testament is ignored and slandered. But not by His chosen people—they still cling to Him! The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob is not the God of the dead, but of the living! And that is true spiritually as well as naturally. Those who are spiritually dead refuse to acknowledge Him and set up gods that they have imagined—but those who are quickened by His Grace delight in Him and glorify His name. Let this, Beloved, be our joyful song, "Your name, O Lord, endures forever!"

13, 14. *And Your memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations. For the LORD will judge His people, and He will repent Himself concerning His servants.* For they have their dark times and are often in trouble through their sin. Then the Lord sends chastisement upon them, but when it has answered His purpose, He gladly enough withdraws it. How different are the idols of the heathen from our God!

15. *The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.* They can do no works, for they are themselves the result of the work of men! Their handiwork can be nothing, for they are the work of men's hands.

16-18. *They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths. They that make them are like unto them: so is everyone that trusts in them.* The original conveys the idea that those who make such gods grow to be like them—they are continually getting to be more and more like them. They become dumb, blind, deaf, dead as they worship such idols as these.

19, 20. *Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron: bless the LORD, O house of Levi: you that fear the LORD, bless the LORD.* All of you, whether you are of the house of Aaron or of the tribe of Levi, to whatever house or tribe you belong, bless the Lord! And if you are Gentiles, even though Abraham acknowledges you not, yet, "you that fear the Lord, bless the Lord."

21. *Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwells at Jerusalem.* Our inmost hearts would bless Him. We cannot make Him more blessed than He is! We cannot add to His Glory, but, oh, we do wish that everything we can do, everything that can be done to His honor, may be done!

21. *Praise you the LORD.* That is, once again, "Hallelujah!" Oh, for the spirit of Divine Grace to set us praising God from the heart—and to keep us at that holy exercise all our days!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"
— 219, 147, 231, and the Doxology.

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

SMALL THINGS NOT TO BE DESPISED
NO. 2601

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 18, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1883.

"For who has despised the day of small things?"
Zechariah 4:10.

IT is a very great folly to despise "the day of small things," for it is usually God's way to begin His great works with small things. We see it every day, for the first dawn of light is but feeble and yet, by-and-by, it grows into the full noontide heat and glory. We know how the early spring comes with its buds of promise, but it takes some time before we get to the beauties of summer or the wealth of autumn. How tiny is the seed that is sown in the garden, yet out of it there comes the lovely flower! How small is the acorn, but how great is the oak that grows up from it! The stream commences with but a gentle rivulet, but it flows on till it becomes a brook, and then a river—perhaps a mighty Amazon—before its course is run!

God begins with men in "the day of small things"—He began so with us. How little and how feeble were we when first we came upon the scene of action! He that is now a giant was once so feeble that he could not move from place to place except as he was carried in his mother's arms. Let us, then, not despise "the day of small things," as we see that God begins with little things in Nature and among the sons and daughters of men. And I am sure that He does so in the great work of His Church. Long ago He began to build a spiritual temple for His own habitation, but, at first, the stones of the foundation were hidden from the great mass of mankind. How little was known in the world at large concerning Abraham and his seed! How very, very slowly did the walls of that great temple rise! Even in the time of Zechariah, it was still "the day of small things" with the people of the Lord.

Comparatively speaking, it is still so, for what is the Christian Church compared with the great mass of the heathen world and of those who reject the Savior? Our Lord's method of spreading His Truth among men was to begin with a handful of disciples in an upper room at Jerusalem, to fill them with His Spirit and then to let them be scattered over the whole known world. This is usually God's plan of working in His Church and also in individual Believers. Of course there are various degrees of ability and Grace even among the Lord's own people. One of the old Puritans said that some men are born with beards and, certainly, there are

some Believers who, almost as soon as they are converted, seem to take great strides and to make speedy advances so that they soon become very useful and are even able to teach things which others only learn after long years of experience. But, generally speaking, this is the order of the growth of Grace in the heart, "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

First, the Truth of God is heard and felt, and the heart bleeds under conviction of guilt. By-and-by another Truth is discovered and the wounded heart is bound up by faith in Christ. This faith grows to full assurance—there is a gradual conformity to the image of Christ—and that image becomes more and more clear till the man reaches the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ Jesus. But first there is the beginning which is small and afterwards there is the latter end which shows a great increase. It is within our souls as it is in the world—the day begins with the dawn, but the shining light "shines more and more unto the perfect day."

Woe unto that man who despises "the day of small things" in the Church of Christ, or who despises "the day of smart things" in any individual Believer, for it is God's day—it is a day out of which great things will yet come and, therefore, he that despises it really despises his Maker's work and despises the great and glorious things which are to come out of the small things which are at present apparent! I know some professing Christians who, I am afraid, despise "the day of small things" in little Churches. There is gathered a small community of godly people. Perhaps they are poor and many of them illiterate. And some of you rich folk who think yourselves wonderfully intelligent—though I am not always sure that you are—if you happen to settle down in that village, you say that you would like to attend the little Chapel or mission room, but the minister puts his h's in the wrong place and his speech is ungrammatical and, of course, that is very painful to your refined taste! Then the people are very poor and you hardly think that the Church is advancing at all, so to help it, you leave it alone! "God forbid," you say, "that we should despise the day of small things!" But you are very sorry that everything is on such a small scale! You say that you pity the poor people, but, instead of helping them, you lie quietly by, or you go off to a more fashionable place where you meet with some of your own class and feel more at home. There, the h's are put in properly, though the Gospel is left out of the preaching! But the people who attend are such a "respectable" sort of folk that you feel it is quite the correct thing to worship with them. If any of you have any respect for yourselves while acting in such a way as that, I hope you will soon discover that there is really nothing "respectable" in that kind of respectability! I mean that there is nothing that should make a man respected when he gives up his convictions and leaves his own true Brothers and Sisters for the sake of getting into a better class of society and seeming to be of a superior order to the godly poor people to whom he might be of real service.

To me, it seems that it should be your glory to join the poorest and weakest churches of your denomination and wherever you go, to say,

"This little cause is not as strong as I should like it to be, but, by the Grace of God, I will make it more influential. At any rate, I wil1 throw in my weight to strengthen the weak things of Zion and certainly I will not despise the day of small things" Where would have been our flourishing Churches of today if our forefathers had disdained to sustain them while *they* were yet in their infancy? I thank God for the men who did not mind going down into back yards and up into haylofts that they might worship God according to the dictates of their conscience. I always delight in those who were willing to stand on the village green with the people sitting down on felled trees or logs to listen to them—and who were not afraid of being called fanatics and of bearing all manner of reproach and scorn for Christ's sake! But if you and I grow to be such great and grand people as some we have known, we must mind that the Lord does not take us down a notch or two, and that, perhaps, by a very painful process. He asks, as if in indignation, "Who has despised the day of small things?" and I believe that He is grieved with any of His servants when they fall into such a state of mind as that—and begin to despise His Church because she is despised by the world, and look down on His people as the high peaks of Bashan seemed to regard with contempt the lowly hill of Zion—and, therefore, the Psalmist said to them, "Why leap you, you high hills? This is the hill which God desires to dwell in; yes, the Lord will dwell in it forever."

My special objective at this time is to reprove those who despise the earlier and weaker works of Grace in the soul. True, it is "the day of small things," but it is a subject for rejoicing and is not to be despised. First, I shall speak *to proud professors who despise "the day of small things" in young beginners.* Then I shall have a little talk with *young beginners who despise "the day of small things" in themselves.* And thirdly, I shall speak of *those who do not despise "the day of small things."* When this question is put to them, "Who has despised the day of small things?" they can answer, "Lord, you know that we have not done so; we have rejoiced in the small signs of Grace in young beginners and we hope *to* see great things grow out of them."

I. First of all, THERE ARE SOME PROFESSING CHRISTIANS WHO DESPISE "THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS" IN OTHERS.

I am sure I do not know exactly at what point the day of Grace begins in some people. There are some who, even before they fully receive the Gospel, have some good thing in them. "Oh, no," you say, "that cannot be." Well, just think a moment. Before the sower went forth to sow, there was a certain part of the farm which was described as "honest and good ground." There was another part that was like the highway and another part covered with thorns or stones. But there was something which distinguished the "honest and good ground" from all the rest of the land. I do not say that it was, then, bringing forth any fruit to God's Glory, but I do say that God. had, from a very early period—I do not know when—made that ground ready and fit to receive the Seed. So I can believe that before a man even hears the Gospel at all, there may be an antecedent

work of what I may almost call secondary Grace—not *saving* Grace, but a making ready of the heart for the reception of the saving Grace of God.

In my own experience, I never quite know where I am to put my finger upon the beginning of God's work in my soul. I can tell the very day and hour when I was converted, but I had many stirrings of conscience before that. I know that I was very effectually convinced of sin, but when the gracious work began, I cannot say. One of the first things that I recollect is lying awake at night because I had done something wrong to my mother. I do not know whether that was not the Grace of God working in my heart even then—I think that it was. I am sure that it was, in some measure, the Lord graciously working within me and making me ready for the more manifest work of His Spirit.

Now, dear Friends, do not despise those little things, those preparation works, but whenever you see them in children, or in adults, be thankful for them. Frequently, when I have been receiving members into the Church, I have asked of a good woman, "Is your husband a Christian?" and the answer has often been, "Well, Sir, he is a very good husband, but I am afraid that he is not a Christian." Then I have enquired, "What does he do with himself on Sundays?" "Oh, Sir, he is always at the Tabernacle! He has been attending the services for years and he is very fond of you, Sir. He will run home and hurry over his tea so as to get to the Prayer Meeting on Monday, and on Thursday nights, he is never absent." I have said, "My good woman, does your husband show such love to the Lord's House and to the minister, and yet he is not converted?" "Yes," she answers, "he is not converted, for sometimes he does what he knows is not right. Still, his attendance upon the means of Grace is a great check upon him. He is a dear good husband, much better than he used to be, but I am afraid he is not a Christian and that he does not truly pray for pardon." "Ah," I say, "let us have a little prayer together about him and let us firmly believe that we shall have him yet. If a man continues to come where we are constantly firing the Gospel gun, one of the stray shots will hit him yet! Be sure that you encourage him to keep on coming and mind that you are very kind to him and help him all you can in finding the Savior—and we will yet rejoice together over him." When moths fly very near the candle, sooner or later they will singe their wings—there is a great Gospel candle burning here and I do not doubt that some of these human moths will dash into the flame, by-and-by! So I hope you will encourage them to come here, again and again, until they are blessedly caught so that they can never fly away. Such people as I have been describing have very curious whims and fancies—they will take offense at almost anything at all, so we must tread very softly and tenderly—and not grieve any with whom it is, in this sense, "the day of small things."

I have known some come to Christ at last and trust Him, but it was with such a very little faith that I hardly know whether, in their case, it was faith born or unbelief dying. You remember the poor man who said to Christ, "Lord, I believe," and then he felt as if he had gone a little too far with his declaration, for he drew back and said, "Help You my unbe-

lief." And these poor halting souls are just in that state—I hope they do believe, but I am sure that they are very unbelieving. They begin to pray, but, oh, what strange prayer it is! Some of them repeat a form of prayer they learned a long while ago which is quite inapplicable to their present case, but still they do mean to pray somehow. They want to pray and though it can scarcely be called prayer, yet I expect that God accepts it as prayer and graciously answers it. They have begun to repent—they have not a very clear view of what sin is, but they know that it is something they would like to get rid of. They are like Paul when he was at Melita—I am not sure that he understood much about snakes and their bites—but when a viper fastened itself onto his hand, he shook it off into the fire. So, these people could not define sin, theologically, but they wish that they were clear of it, they long to be pardoned. It is "the day of small things" with them and it is not to be despised.

Ah, dear Friends, when a man tries to get away alone, that he may read his Bible, do not despise him! When a tear falls during a sermon and he brushes it away and wants to make you believe that there was something the matter with his nose, do not despise him, even for that! I have seen that sort of thing happen many a time and I have been pleased to notice it. We ought to delight in anything and everything that looks in the right direction—and never think of despising it.

Now I want to come to the most important point—Why ought we not to despise these small things—these feeble beginnings? Especially when there is a little Grace in any people, why must we not despise them?

Well, first, *because in the Church of Christ, there always were and there always will be babes as well as men.* Do not despise the babes—where are the men to come from if there are no babes? If it happens in God's family as it does in most families, you will soon find that it will not do to despise the babes. How very grieved all loving parents are when their infants are despised! You may ignore the big son if you like, but do not despise the babes. So, with regard to Christ's family, be sure to honor the little ones—take care of them, never stand in their way. When they want to come to Christ, allow them to come. It does not say, "draw them," for they are wanting to come, but get out of their way and do not hinder them from coming. And whenever you meet with one who has lately been born of God and who is tender of heart, do not despise him. As long as the family of Christ is to increase, there always must be babes, and babes must never be despised.

Again, dear Friends, do not speak harshly to those who are newly born to God, for *you were once a babe.* Yes, yes, though you do not like to be reminded of it, you, great giant that you now are, were once an infant! And you with your deep experience and your profound knowledge, you who think you can set everybody else right, why, once you hardly knew that twice two made four! You had to begin at the very beginning just like others have had to do! So remember what you used to be, look back to the hole of the pit from where you were dug and do not begin to despise others who are in the same condition in which you once were!

Remember, again, that *the greatest saints in this world, or who ever were in this world, were babes in Grace once.* Whether it was Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, they all began with little Grace and weak spiritual life at the first. Yes, there is not a bright spirit before the Throne of God who has washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, but once was only an infant in spiritual things! And if the greatest were once so little, that is a good reason why we should never despise "the day of small things."

Besides, dear Friends, it should always check every tendency in this direction when we remember that *God made and God loves the very least Believer.* You know, a silver sixpence is as really silver as a half-crown. And the Queen's image on the one is as genuine as on the other. They are current coin of the realm and I am sure you will not treat with scorn the little pieces of money. Then why should we despise the small coins in Christ's treasury? When our dear young Brothers and Sisters are made of the same metal and stamped with the same image as we are, why should we despise them, though we happen to be, or *think* we are, of somewhat more weight and value in the Church of God than they are? Oh, do not despise the lowly violet that hides its head among the leaves! It is quite as much a flower of God's making as the finest tulip that airs its beauty aloft, or the most brilliant standard rose that is before your eyes! God made the little things and God loves them and, as parents have a special love for their weak and little children, so has God a special favor towards the lambs of His flock, and He takes special care of the seedlings in His garden which have not yet come to the fullness of growth. Therefore, do not despise them.

If you do, there is one sentence I would utter that ought to rebuke you very effectually. *Your Master would not despise them if He were here.* Christ has a quick eye to see little Graces in His people and when He sees them, He delights in them. A diamond is a diamond if it is ever so small. And Christ's people are Christ's people let them have ever so little Grace. Oh, if the Lord Jesus Christ would have carried that lamb in His bosom, why do you refuse to carry it? Why do you neglect it? Why should there be so often heard stinging words and keen, cutting, sarcastic remarks about the feebleness of knowledge or the defects of practice, when, if there is but Grace in the heart, you and I ought to rejoice to see it? I have often quoted to you the words of Jerome when he said that he loved Christ in Augustine and he loved Augustine in Christ. So ought we to love the weakest Believers—to love Christ in them, and to love them in Christ. May the Holy Spirit teach us to be like our Master in this respect as well as in all others!

I have finished this word of gentle rebuke when I add that if you and I do despise "the day of small things," *the probability is that we shall have to smart for it.* You remember that passage in Ezekiel where the Lord speaks of the fat cattle pushing the weak cattle with their horns and their shoulders? They were big bulls of Bashan and they were always goring one and pushing against another because they happened to be weak and sickly—and the Lord said that He would judge between cattle

and cattle and those that had been so headstrong, so proud and so cruel would have to smart for it. The day shall come, my proud Brother, when you will be glad to sit at the feet of that young Christian you now despise! I have noticed that sort of thing many a time. It is a part of my pastoral observation that when persons who were genuine Christians have been proudly lifted up, they have been made to go down very low till they have envied those they once despised, and said, "If we felt as sure of salvation as that dear young man that we judged so harshly, we would willingly enough change places with him and take what we called his inexperience and his lack of knowledge, if we could be just as simple in our confidence in Christ as he is." Therefore, Beloved, if you do not want to bring the rod upon your own back, despise not "the day of small things," but be ready to cherish and comfort all in whom the work of Grace has apparently begun even to the lightest extent!

II. Now, secondly, THERE ARE SOME WHO DESPISE "THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS " IN THEMSELVES. They think that it is very humble to do so. I am not sure that it is—I think it is very foolish to do so.

There are some who despise "the day of small things" in themselves in this way—*they pass by the small things.* Suppose that a young man is impressed, under a sermon, with a sense of sin. A wise thing for him to do is to get home as quickly as he can and cry, "Lord, I do not know whether this is true repentance, but, if it is not, make it so! Lord, I am half afraid that I am only a stony-ground hearer and that this good Seed will spring up for a little while and then will wither. Lord, break my stony heart and do it effectually." Be very thankful, dear Friends, if you have the faintest spiritual impressions. I know some men who would almost give their eyes if they could but feel anything, but they say that they sit and hear, and the only result is what Cowper said—

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

So, if you have any spiritual feeling at all, do not despise it, but go to God with it and pray that the work which seems to be begun in you may be carried on until it is complete—and that if it is not begun, it may begin at once. When you feel, sometimes, in the assemblies of God's House, a softening influence stealing over your spirit, or when possibly, in the middle of your work—you do not know why—you suddenly feel very tender in heart—or, perhaps, walking down into the City early in the morning, before many people are astir, you feel a solemnity quite unusual to you—do not despise it! These little things may lead on to a blessed saving work—I pray the Lord that you may take care of these dewdrops of Grace. It there are but a few tiny drops and if they are but cared for and valued, the Lord will yet look still more graciously upon you and send you a copious shower of blessing. Do not despise anything that looks like Grace in your heart. God help you to take it as a gardener at this time of the year takes the little slips and cuttings and puts them in silver sand to make them grow, that he may have the flowering plants, by-and-by. Use your cuttings—the little things that seem as if they could not have

any life in them. God would have you plant them in favorable circumstances, that they may grow to His praise and glory.

Some despise "the day of small things" in themselves because *they do not think that any good can come of them.* When I was preaching this morning, [*Sermon #1739, Volume 29—"Bankrupt Debtors Discharged"*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org] I thought that, perhaps, some poor soul would take comfort to himself, and I said to a Brother when I went outside, "I do like, sometimes, to have a subject which comes rolling up like a sea of Grace" because there are so many people who are like oysters in the riverbeds waiting for the tide to return. I did hope, this morning, that it was a flood tide, and that some of you would open your shells and that the blessed Word of God would come into your very souls! If you do that, it will come in. The oyster cannot make the sea roll up, but whenever he feels it rolling over him, he says, "Now is the time for me to open my shell," and when you feel, "Now is the time for me to seek the Lord, now is the day of salvation, now is the high tide of Grace," you shall have the blessing! It is all around you, or else you would not have opened your shell. It is the very flood tide of Grace that has made you feel what you feel. Therefore be glad and do not despise it. It may seem a little thing to feel tender and solemn, but it is not so—it is often the beginning of a blessed work of Grace—therefore value it highly.

I have known some to despise the blessing *by resolutely resisting its entrance into their hearts.* I can never forget some instances of this resistance that I have known. I was preaching once, in a certain city, and a gentleman who had been very kind to me was in the congregation, but I saw him get up in the middle of the sermon and go out of the building. The Brother who was with me slipped out after him and said to him, "My dear Sir, why did you come out?" He answered, "Mr. Spurgeon has got me in his hands. I am like an India rubber doll and he can twist me into any shape that he likes. I am afraid that if I had listened to him for another ten minutes, I would have been converted." So off he went, deliberately stamping out, as far as he could, the spark of the Truth of God as it came toward him. He would not let the good Seed grow—he invited the birds of the air to come and steal it away. Do not forget that although the Lord graciously changes man's will and He has absolute power over the human will and makes men willing in the day of His power, yet He never saves anybody against his will and, while the will stands out against God and is unrenewed and unchanged, the man is still unsaved. It seems to me a dreadful thing that people can come to the House of God without any desire to get a blessing and there cover themselves up in armor of mail to keep every arrow from getting anywhere near their hearts. That is one method of despising "the day of small things."

I know some others who despise "the day of small things" because *if they get a little good in their hearts, they do not try to get more.* If we did not expect a little child to ever grow, we would really be despising it, putting it down as a dwarf or a monstrosity. So, if the Grace of God has come into your heart, you will do all in your power to make it to grow and

increase and thus prove that you do not despise it. I think I have said enough to show that if any here have the slightest sign of the beginnings of Grace, any glimmerings of the Divine Light, any first outlines of the image of Christ upon their heart, they must not despise them, but they should pray God to bless them and bring them to maturity. If they do so, I will tell you what God will do—it is hinted at in the verse from which our text is taken—"For they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel." They had begun to build, but it was such a poor paltry piece of work and the wall was still so low, that they despised it. But when they saw the prince standing there, with the plummet in his hand and saw stone after stone brought and laid in its place—and their great leader officiating as the chief architect, they said to one another—"Look, the prince is there with the plummet in his hand! He is a man who never undertakes a task unless he goes through with it, so, depend upon it, the work will be completed."

In like manner I can see that, although it may be very little Grace that is in your heart, yet Christ has come with that Grace! Christ is building in your heart, Christ is laying the foundation stone, the Prince of the kings of the earth, Christ Jesus, is there with His plummet and He that has begun the good work in you will carry it on till it is perfected in Glory! Oh, what a blessing it is to look to Christ with the plummet in His hand and say, "Great Master-Builder, I will not despise these foundations because, as yet, they are scarcely seen above the soil, for I know that You, who have begun the good work, will carry it on and perfectly perform all that You have promised. The Temple will yet appear to Your praise where now there seems to be but a tiny heap of stones."

That is the way to cure you of despising "the day of small things" in yourselves.

III. Now, my last point is this. THERE ARE SOME WHO NEVER DESPISE "THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS." I have time for only a few words on this part of my subject, but I wish them to be very tender words.

First, *true pastors* never despise "the day of small things." Speaking for myself, I can say that I love to see in those of you who are unconverted any sign of serious thought, any intimation of a coming change, any token that you are turning unto the Lord. My heart is gladdened whenever I perceive it. Does anyone think that I despise it? Why, I pray to God continually to bring it to pass! Despise it? I look for it as the reward of my toil! If I did but know that I had awakened thought in any one of you, I would go home happy! If I did but hear that the Lord was bringing a score or two to Himself, I would gladly lie awake at night to bless His name for such a mercy as that! I do not care for the vastness of this congregation, but I do care for the individual souls in it and I rejoice most of all over those who are saved out of it. What good is it simply to bring you here and to have you sitting quietly while I talk to you? It is a waste of time and labor unless it brings you to Christ! But if I know that any of you are brought to penitence and faith, I am sure that I do not despise it, for I value such blessings above the choicest gold!

And let me also tell you that *your dear parents, your Christian wife and your godly daughter* who persuaded you to come to this service do not despise "the day of small things." I have known some of our members do really extraordinary things in order to get people to come here in the hope that they might be converted. There was one who, after many attempts, at last induced a man to promise that he would come with him one day, so he went round to fetch him. "Oh, I cannot come!" said the man, "I am making a rabbit hutch." "Well," said the other, "I have one ready made that I will give you." "But," said the man, "I cannot come, I promised to go and see a man who has a pair of pigeons to sell." My friend answered, "I have a pair of pigeons I will give to you if you will come with me." It was all in vain. He might offer the man what he would, he could not get him. I hope that he has brought him by this time, but if not, I know that he will stick to him till he does see him here! And I know another thing, that he will bring the friend to his own seat and he will, if necessary, stand in the aisle and pray for him all through the service! Well, now, if he gets his friend to hear the Word and sees that he is impressed by it, you do not suppose that he will despise "the day of small things," do you? On the contrary, he will be glad even for the slightest sign of the working of God's Spirit in his friend's heart!

Your godly mother, when she hears that you have been to the Tabernacle, will say, "Bless God for that!" If she finds that you have begun to pray, her heart will leap within her! A dear father, a minister of the Gospel, writes to me, and says, "My son had never decided for God till he went to hear you at Exeter Hall. During the evening sermon he bowed his head and gave himself up to the Lord. And now he is proposed as a member of my Church. God bless you, Sir!" It is always so with true Christians—they do not despise "the day of small things," but they are glad when their children are brought to Christ! And it is just the same with *all soul-winners* and I hope that many here are of that class. If they can spy anything like the tiniest egg of Grace, they feel so glad! And they watch you and they say to one another, "Is that light that I can see there in the East?" And the other says, "I do not know. I am afraid it is not." "Oh," says the first friend, "but I think it is. Does it not look a little gray just over there?" "No," replies the other, "I am afraid that it is not morning light yet." That is how some of us talk about you—we are often talking and praying about you, dear Hearers, and we say to one another, "When will So-and-So come to the Savior?" There is a good man here whom I pray for nearly every day and I know that his wife does the same. He loves to come here, yet he is still an unsaved man. But, by the Grace of God, he cannot remain where he is if prayer can stir him! We will pray him out of it and bring him to the Savior—may the Lord grant that it may speedily be so!

There is one other Person who never despises "the day of small things," and with Him I finish. And that is, *our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.* He is so eager to see of the travail of His soul that if He spies in you even a desire after Him, He is pleased with it. Believe me, if you have but a spark of desire after Christ, He has a whole furnace of

desire after you! Oh, that you would have Him as your Savior! He is free to every soul of you who will have Him! Is it not put just so in His last invitation? "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Do not think that He excludes you—you may exclude yourself, but if there is in your heart any wish, any shadow of a wish, anything like a desire for Christ, you may come, and welcome! Mercy's gate is wide open. Christ invites you to His house and to His heart. Oh, come to Him and come now! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." May His Divine Spirit lead you to believe on Him at this moment! To believe on Him is to trust Him. Throw yourself on Him, sink or swim. Take Christ to be yours! Have you done it? Then you are saved, for, "he that believes on the Son has everlasting life." His believing is the evidence that he is already a saved man! So, go your ways and the Lord be with you, but I charge every one of you, meet me in Heaven! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *ISAIAH 54:1-10.*

Verse 1. *Sing, O barren, you that did not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you that did not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the LORD.* In this Western clime we do not know all the misery which was felt by Eastern women who were childless. They were looked down upon and despised. Yet here God bids them sing! And, dear Friends, if you and I feel as if our hearts have become barren so that we cannot think of God or raise our thoughts towards Him as we would desire. If we feel that we have become useless and for that reason our spirit is greatly depressed, let us give heed to this sweet, this charming exhortation of Jehovah—"Sing, O barren soul; break forth into singing, and cry aloud," for God can turn our barrenness into fruitfulness and make us to rejoice exceedingly before Him. If we are now sighing and crying because we are not what we ought to be, or what we want to be, God can, in the richness of His Grace, make us all that we desire! Therefore let us begin to be joyful even before the miracle of mercy is worked! Let us have unbounded faith in God and expect Him to bless us even while we are in our lowest state.

2, 3. *Enlarge the place of your tent and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations: spare not, lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes; for you shall break forth on the right hand and on the left; and your seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.* This was good news for the poor Gentiles who were so long spiritually barren, but whose seed was to spread all over the earth! This prophecy has been already fulfilled in a great measure and the very wording of it is a direction to us if we desire to see the Church of God increased. Make ready for God's blessing, you who are pining and groaning for greater things than these—God is about to bless you! Enlarge your tents! Lengthen the cords and strengthen the stakes! Prepare for the coming blessing, for you are to have better and brighter days than you

have ever known! Therefore be no more sad, but look forward with joyful anticipation to the good things in store for you.

4. *Fear not; for you shall not be ashamed: neither be you confounded; for you shall not be put to shame: for you shall forget the shame of your youth and shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more.* I am not going to interpret the passage in its strict connection, but to use it for our comfort and instruction. O you that are cast down, you poor trembling ones that would gladly be at one with God, but feel as if you cannot find Him, believe in the Lord your God and trust in His Son, Jesus Christ, for there are glad times coming for you! All your former days of sadness shall be forgotten and you shall have such joy and delight as you can hardly imagine at present.

5. *For your Maker is your husband; the LORD of Hosts is His name; and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel the God of the whole earth shall He be called.* Oh, what a blessing that is! This is a wide-spread mercy—"The God of the whole earth shall He be called." My Soul, come and hide beneath the shadow of these earth-covering wings, for there is room for you beneath their welcome shelter and, once there, you shall not be banished from that sacred spot, for it is written, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." "Your Maker is your husband," united to you in eternal wedlock! Therefore, be of good comfort.

6. *For the LORD has called you as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when you were refused, says your God.* Poor rejected one, has the world cast you off? Do its sinful pleasures pall upon you? Listen, "The Lord has called you." You are divorced from the world that you may be forever united to Him!

7, 8. *For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the LORD your Redeemer.* What words of comfort lie here to those of the Lord's people who have fallen into spiritual darkness and come upon evil days! God still remembers you! His wrath is but for a moment and will swiftly pass away—but His age-enduring kindness which sweeps across the boundless eternity shall be with you forever!

9, 10. *For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that 1 would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the LORD that has mercy on you.* Oh, for Grace, oh, for the help of the Holy Spirit to lay hold upon these precious promises, and to feed on them!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 416, 602, 538

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A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 30, 1855.

"And about the eleventh home he went out and found others standing idle." Matthew 20:6.

WE have come to the end of another year. Better is the end of a year than the beginning thereof. A year is begun with fear and trembling—it closes with joy and thankfulness. In the beginning of the year, we are like the sailor when he leaves port, hoists his sails and goes out on the broad sea toward a distant country. At the end of the year, we are sometimes like that mariner when he casts his anchor overboard and lies still in the haven. We have come into harbor, now, at the end of the year and here we rest and gratefully review our voyage.

But, in coming to the end of another year, we have some solemn things to talk about, as well as some on which to congratulate ourselves. This is to be our subject and may God make it both solemn and profitable for the winding-up of the old year. "And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle." These words are taken from the parable of the householder who went out early and hired laborers into his vineyard. And who went out again at the third hour, and the sixth hour, and the ninth hour and, at last, went out at the eleventh hour and did the same. And when the laborers came to be paid, he gave to those who were hired at the eleventh hour the same pay as to those whom he had hired at the beginning of the day. We shall note, in our text, first, the *Sovereignty of Divine Grace.* Secondly, *the mercy of God.* And afterwards we will endeavor *to make a solemn application of the passage to both old and young.*

I. First, in our text, we have DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY VERY PROMINENT.

When we say Divine Sovereignty, we mean that God has the same rights which an absolute monarch has, that, just as a sovereign, under the old Jewish laws, or under the Medes and Persians, had a right to do entirely as he willed with his subjects, and there were none that could stop his hand, or say, "What are you doing?" even so, God, only in an infinitely higher and much more righteous sense, is absolute Monarch in this world and has undoubted right to do with everyone of us just whatever He pleases. The Apostle Paul wisely asked, "Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" That Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty—alas, too much discarded—must be proclaimed, however men may bite their

lips, and however angry they may be to hear themselves humbled in the dust and Jehovah God exalted as their Master!

This parable shows the Sovereignty of God *with regard to the calling of certain persons.* The householder went out early in the morning and called so many. He went out at the third hour and called more. He went out at the sixth, the ninth and the eleventh hours and still he found more persons unemployed. Did he find them expecting or seeking work? No. He found them "standing idle in the marketplace." They were not working, nor doing anything. He found them standing idle and so, just as he pleased, he said to some of them, "Go and work in my vineyard." There is such a thing as Divine Sovereignty with regard to the choice of persons who are to be saved. If one man is saved and not another, God has made the difference and God has the *right* to make the difference. If my brother shall enter Heaven and I shall be sent to Hell, God has a right to save my brother and He would be righteous in my damnation, for I deserve it. And if my brother does not deserve to be saved—as he does not—yet God has a right to give salvation to him and to withhold it from me, if so it pleases Him. My soul falls down in abject submission at His feet! I have no rights when I come before the Almighty. I have no claims on Him. I have so sinned and so erred that if He had sent my soul to Hell, I should have richly deserved it. God has a right to do as He wills with His creatures and He exhibits this right in His choice of those whom He calls to work in His vineyard.

But, again, Divine Sovereignty is exhibited *in the time when the householder called his people.* Some were called early in the morning. Some at the third hour, some at the sixth, some at the ninth, some at the eleventh. The man who was called at the eleventh hour did not grumble and say, "Why did you not call me in the morning?" The man who was called in the morning, though it is said that he afterwards murmured because he did not have more pay than the last who were hired, yet, if he had been in his right mind, would have been thankful to the householder that he had given him the honor of working in his vineyard and had called him so early into it. It is a mercy to be effectually called by Grace at any time and we must not dictate to God when He shall give us His Grace. God exercises His Sovereignty in calling and converting sinners when He pleases. We have some in our churches who have been Christians ever since they were four or five years of age. And we have others who were not converted until they were 60 or seventy. God calls His people out of the world and from the service of sin and Satan at all periods of life—and thus He exhibits His Divine Sovereignty in saving men when He pleases.

How often have I heard legal preachers assert that if a man is not saved before he is thirty, it is not likely that he will be saved at all! And that if a man has attended the House of God for 30 years and is not saved, there is just a possibility, but hardly a probability, that He ever will be saved. That is all nonsense, or something worse, because God is God—He saves whom He wills and He saves them when He wills! Our Lord said to Nicodemus, "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it comes, and to here it goes:

so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." God is just as able to convert a man with gray hairs on his head as He is to convert a man of thirty—there is no difference. We all stand before Him as sinners and if He pleases to save a gray-headed man, He can do so. Men talk in the way I mentioned just now in order to stir up the young to seek Christ, but they little know that while such language has little or no effect upon the young, on the other hand it often depresses the spirits of the old and makes them think, "Surely, then, our hour of mercy is passed and we cannot be saved." And yet these same preachers quote Dr. Watts and say—

"Life is the time to serve the Lord,
The time to insure the great reward!
And while the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return.
Life is the hour that God has given
To escape from Hell and fly to Heaven!
The day of Grace, and mortals may
Secure the blessings of the day."

Yes, Beloved, as long as a man is living in this world, and I also am living, I will preach the Gospel to him! And if I could find "the wandering Jew"—if such a being ever existed—and he were nearly 2,000 years of age, I would still preach the Gospel even to him—and if he trusted Christ as his Savior, he would find mercy and salvation!

So Divine Sovereignty shows itself, first, in the calling of certain persons, and, next, in the time when those persons are called.

And, once again, there will be Divine Sovereignty *in the ultimate reward of those who are called.* The householder gave to every man a penny. The one who was hired at the eleventh hour came in fresh to his work and did just a little hoeing, or digging, or pruning, or something of that sort—and there was a penny for him. In comes another man, who wipes the sweat from his brow, and says, "Ah, I have been hard at work these 12 hours"—and there was a penny for him! Neither more nor less for one or the other—a penny for each one who came to work in the vineyard. Thus God shows His Sovereignty in His distribution of rewards. When some of the laborers murmured against the good man of the house, he answered one of them, and said, "Friend, I do you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a penny? Take 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? So the last shall be first, and the first last, for many are called, but few chosen." Those who came last received just as much as those who came first.

I am not quite sure whether that doctrine is true, which is called the Doctrine of Degrees of Glory. I have heard it preached very frequently, but I never yet saw any Scripture warrant to back it up. The text that the advocates of this doctrine usually bring forward is the passage, "One star differs from another star in glory." But anyone who can read English and who turns to that passage, will see that the Apostle is not speaking of degrees of glory in Heaven, but of different kinds of glories in the *stellar* heavens. And besides, stars may differ without varying in degree of glory, for one may be red, another green, a third yellow and yet all may be alike

bright. Even so, though all the saints will differ in some respects, I do not see why there should necessarily be degrees of glory. There may be degrees of glory, but, so far as I can judge by reading the Scripture, I cannot see the slightest evidence to prove the doctrine to be true.

What is the glory of a saint? Is it not Christ's righteousness? And shall I, the least of all saints, have less of Christ's righteousness than the greatest? Is not the glory of the saint the love of his Master? And will my Master love a poor old woman who lived up three pairs of stairs and died without ever having been heard of, less than He loves the most popular minister? Ah, Beloved, there are degrees of Grace, *here*, but we know not that there will be any degrees of glory! Why should a poor creature, lying on a sick bed, who for years has trusted in her Savior, have less glory than another who has been allowed to toil in His service? Why, it is an honor for us to be busy in good works here—we do not need to be honored for honor and, because God has given us a little more honor, here, to have an eternal difference made between us and others of His people. No, Beloved, every man who worked in the vineyard had a penny, and every saint will, in God's own time, be in Heaven! He will be with Christ and like Christ. How can he be more one with Christ than another is? All Believers are blood-washed, all are equally justified, all shall be equally sanctified! And as their persons shall be all pure, so do we believe that their Heaven will be equal, or, if not, Scripture certainly gives no countenance to the idea of degrees of glory.

In this matter of eternal rewards, God will display His Sovereignty. There shall be some old man who has lived to be ninety and who was saved only in the last year of his life—and when he enters Heaven, he will sit as much beside Christ as one like Timothy, who was called in his early youth, preached the Gospel during a long course of usefulness, and died with honors on his head! There shall be a poor wretched sinner, like the thief who was saved when he hung upon a cross, and he will sing as sweet, and as loud, and as strong as the Apostle Paul, or the Apostle Peter, "for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek"—between one man and another—"for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." Thus He displays His Sovereignty in choosing the persons who shall be saved, in selecting the time when they shall be saved and in their ultimate reward.

II. This brings us to consider THE GREAT MERCY OF GOD EXHIBITED IN HIS SOVEREIGNTY.

This householder went out to hire men for his vineyard because he needed them, didn't he? Yes, but God does not go to hire men and bring them into His vineyard because He needs them. There is not a man in this world that God could not do without. "Oh," you hear persons say, sometimes, "suppose Mr. So-and-So were to die? What would the Church do?" Why, do as it did before—live on its God! For—

"When all created streams are dry,
His fullness is the same."

And when He calls any of His servants away, He can work out His eternal purposes quite as well without us as He does with us! The householder in the parable needed men, but God is altogether independent of them

and herein is the mercy of God manifested—that He goes out to find men to come into His vineyard when He positively can do without them! Does He need any of us? What? He who guides the stars and keeps them revolving in their orbits by the motions of His fingers—does He need an insignificant atom like one of ourselves to serve Him? What? He whom all the hosts of angels worship and before whose Throne the cherubim do veil their faces with their wings—does He need a tiny creature like man to give Him homage and reverence? If He did need men, He could soon create as many mighty kings and princes as He pleased to wait upon Him—and He could have crowned heads to bow before His footstool and emperors to conduct Him through the world in triumph.

But He needs not men. He can do without them if He pleases. O you stars! You are bright, but you are not the lamps which light the way of God—He needs you not. O sun! You are bright, but your heat warms not Jehovah. O earth! You are beautiful, but your beauty is not needed to gladden His heart! God is glad enough without you. O lightning! Though you write His name in fire upon the midnight darkness, He needs not your brightness! And wild ocean! You are mighty, but though you sing His deep praise in your solemn chorus, your storms do not add to His Glory. Winds! Though you attend the march of God across the pathless ocean. Thunders, though you utter God's voice in terrible majesty and track the onward progress of the God of armies, He needs you not! He is great without you—great beyond you, great above you and, as He needs you not, He needs *us* not!

Then look at the mercy of God, *to come after any of us.* To come after me, to come after you, my Sister, my Brother. Admire His Grace. Look at the householder in this parable. He comes early in the morning. He comes late in the evening and he comes many times between. In like manner, God is untiring in His mercy. The householder rose up early to go out and find some men to work in his vineyard. So does God. How early He goes to some! Blessed be His dear name, there were some of us who were lit to our slumbers while we were young, by the lamps of the sanctuary. We can recollect when, in our midnight watches, like young Samuel of old, the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and we answered. "Here am I, Lord." Oh, we can remember when our grandmother Lois, and our mother Eunice taught us out of the Scriptures! When we were dandled on the lap of piety, when the breath of sacred song was breathed by us and an atmosphere laden with the perfume of Heaven was always around us! We inhaled it even from our infancy. Ah, hear this, you sons of Grace, God came to some of you very early, but, Beloved, He does not get tired. He came for some early in the morning and they would not go. He came after them in the preaching of the Gospel and they spurned all that the minister said. But when God is determined to save, He does not tire, but continues seeking even to the eleventh hour!

And now, O you gray-headed men, God has come after some of you! All your coming to God's sanctuary from your earliest days have been of little or no use up to now. Yet now, I beseech you, consider that He comes to you even at this eleventh hour, for the Lord's mercy is untiring, His Grace is immutable! Having set His heart upon a man, if He does not

come at the first hour, He shall come, some time or other. Divine Mercy will sweetly dispose Him to come. Blessed be the name of our God, there have been some who have come into our churches who would not have been taken into any army in the whole world, for they were made, by old age, too feeble to fight. Their eyes had begun to be dim. Father Time had written his name on their brows, their hair had become whitened and they came leaning on their staff to tell us what they knew of the Lord's redeeming love. Some of the sweetest tales I have ever heard have been told me by gray-headed sinners, saved in their last days, just when they were trembling on the borders of the grave! Do you think you see such a scene? The poor old sinner is tottering along—another minute he will be in Hell! Hear the voice of God, "Gabriel, stop that man! One more step and he will be in the Pit!" Down flies Gabriel, catches him in his arms and stops him for a moment, while the Holy Spirit whispers to him, "Flee from the wrath to come!" And, starting backward, he looks at the Pit wherein he had almost fallen and he hears hollow Time sinking down into eternity—yet he is saved!

Surely, there will not be any man in Heaven who will bless God more than the gray-headed man who is called at the eleventh hour! Blessed be the name of God that such sinners are brought in—poor decrepit old creatures past labor and good for nothing—yet they are saved. Yes, even those who have worn themselves out in the service of Satan, God is willing to receive! The devil's hacks, Christ will not cast away! They who have nothing left that is of any use in the world, Jesus Christ graciously receives at the eleventh hour! He says to them, as the householder said to the men in the marketplace, "Why stand you here all the day, idle?"

Do you not, Beloved, admire the stupendous, amazing, astonishing Grace of God which thus reclaims men at the eleventh hour? There is a young man in a very poor position in life. You come to him and say, "Come to my house and be my son. I will wash you clean, I will give you warm clothes, I will make you rich." But he turns away and does despite to your invitations. He insults you to your face, mocks at your friends, breaks your holy days and thoroughly despises you. When you look at him, again, he is beginning to enter middle age. You go to him and say, "Will you come to me, now, and be my son?" "No," he says, "I will not." Do you not think that by the time he was 40 or 50 years old, you would be quite tired of him? And suppose it possible that, when he was 70 or 80 years of age, he should come and knock at your door and ask to be adopted as your son—would you not go to him and say, "What? You have the impudence to come now, while these forty, fifty, sixty years you have refused to accept my invitation! You vile ingrate, I will have nothing to do with you! Do you think I am going to have you, now, when there is nothing left of you that is worth having? Go back to where you have been all these years! Those you served when you were young, you may serve now that you are old! You had the pleasures of sin when you were young, go and have it now! It is a fine thing to make an almshouse of your religion, coming to me to take care of you when you are so old that you cannot take care of yourself! Be off with you!"

You and I might act like that, but the Lord does not. He not only does not turn a gray-headed old sinner away, but He goes after him, Himself, or else he would not come! Though He has sent His servants, and the man has rejected them time after time, He says, "He will not come unless I go after him Myself." So He goes to the poor palsied man, who can be of no service to Him, and says, "Come unto Me! Even you have I loved with an everlasting love, and I will save even you! You shall be delivered from going down to the Pit, your eyes shall be saved from tears and your feet from falling." There is Divine Sovereignty! There is unparalleled mercy!

III. Now may God help us while we ENDEAVOR TO MAKE A SOLEMN APPLICATION OF THIS SUBJECT, first, TO THE OLD!

It would be presumption in a young man to speak to the aged if he spoke to them simply as a young man. But, as a preacher, I am God's ambassador, and if God has sent me, no man may despise my youth, nor is it to be considered in the least degree, nor do I consider it, myself. I speak with the same authority that the most aged minister can command, for I have the same commission that he has and he has no better message than mine. [This sermon was preached in Brother Spurgeon's first full calendar year as a preacher in London. He was 21 years of age.—EOD.] Old man, come here and let me give you a solemn address, to warn you of the wrath to come!

Gray-headed man, I beseech you, first of all, *remember how many years you have wasted.* Look back upon your misspent life and count your years over and over again. What do you say of your sixty, seventy, perhaps eighty years? Your harvest is past, your summer is ended and you are not saved! In your youth, oh, how much you might have done, then! In your middle age, oh, how your vigor might have been spent in doing good to your fellows! Even some of your old age, how has it been misspent and misused! Weep, I beseech you, weep bitterly! Let your cheeks, furrowed with the ravages of time, feel, for a moment, the solemn scalding tears of regret, because you have wasted all those years!

Remember, also, that *you can never get them back again.* Long as you may live, you can never get one of them back! They have winged their way behind you, they are with the years beyond the flood and though you toil now, you can never recover the time you have lost—it is gone beyond the hope of rescue. Could you count out at once the price of a kingly ransom, you could not have back again even an hour! Consider then, my aged Friend, how much of your time has already run to waste and how many years have rolled away and you are still unsaved.

Consider, next, *suppose you are saved now, what a very little you can do for God!* At the most, you can have but a few short years in which to serve the Lord. Death is at your gates—those gates are tottering beneath the battering-ram of age. Death is already besieging you! The walls of your town of Mansoul are shaking beneath the devastating engines of decay. In all probability you have not more than a few years to live and, perhaps, not more than a few months, or weeks, or even *days*—and then you must be gone the way of all flesh.

Consider, too, O aged man, if you are put into the vineyard at this eleventh hour, *how little you can do for others!* You cannot preach the

Gospel now—your eyes are, perhaps, too dim even to read God's Word to others. Your voice has lost melody. The windows out of which lust once looked have become darkened and you cannot hope that the fire of life shall light them up again. Consider how little you can do, even if you are saved, now—how much less, if your salvation is still postponed and you are not delivered from sin for years to come! Consider what is gone, you hoary heads, and turn unto the Lord even now!

O aged Sinner, *consider how much trouble has been lost upon you!* The vinedresser said of the barren fig tree, "I will dig about it and fertilize it." How have you been dug about and fed! Another 104 sermons you have heard during the past year and yet you are unsaved! For 50 years, for 60 years you have attended the sanctuary every Sabbath, yet, as oil from a slab of marble, the Word has run off you! Thousands of sermons have left you as dead as ever and myriads of warnings have all sunk, as it were, into the sea like a pebble hurled into it, which is lost and gone. In all your Sabbaths, you have secured no merchandise for Heaven! You have toiled hard enough for this world and now where is all that you have gained? You have put your treasures into a bag full of holes! You have, "sown the wind," and you shall, "reap the whirlwind," unless you speedily repent and seek the Lord.

Consider, once more, old man, *how long and how much you have provoked your God.* Call to remembrance the sins of your youth. How often has that hand of yours which now is quivering with death's touch, grasped the wineglass of the drunk in your youth! Look back upon your manhood—has it not been devoted to Satan and blackened with enormities of guilt? And now, up to this time, you have still provoked your God to smite you! His long-suffering arm has not crushed you and His mercy has kept back the sword of Justice, but can you expect such gracious treatment as that much longer? Will God be merciful forever? Will He be kind throughout eternity? And if His mercy should fail, will not His justice make short work with your soul?

And yet, if that thought does not stir you up to repentance, consider, once more, *if you should be unsaved, how horrible is the place appointed for you!* How fearful must be the doom which you shall receive! You are not a young sinner—he would be damned. You are an old sinner—how increasingly awful must be your doom! You are not one who has sinned because of mere youthful passion, but you have sinned when passion has died away and when prudence has taken possession of your soul. You have sinned when the heat and passion of youth have died. You have sinned, therefore, worse than a young man can have done! O old man, may a child warn you? I am sure I love you with all my heart and even now my young eyes weep for you. Have you never seen an old man led by a little child when he was blind? It may be that, though you are blind, a little child shall lead you to the Savior. It is a child who now speaks to you. O gray-headed man! Would it not be to you an eternal source of misery if I, a youth, were saved and you, who are aged, wert lost? Oh, when you see a young Christian, do not the tears run down your cheeks? When you see a child in Grace, does the penitential sigh never start from your bosom? I think if I were old like you and saw some

young child saved, I would wring my hands in misery, and say, "O Lord, is such a child a Christian and yet I am unsaved, I am unforgiven, I am still unpardoned?" Quake, quake, quake, O aged sinner! Be afraid, be afraid, be afraid, O unregenerate old man! Let your knees knock together, let your blood curdle in your veins, let your heart quiver, let your flesh be ready to creep at the thought that you will be lost and that, as the Lord God lives, there is but a step between you and death—between you and Hell!

But there are THE YOUNG and they are, perhaps, smiling, and saying, "Ah, all that is good advice for old age! It is quite right that old people should be religious, but why should we think about such things? We have not come to our 11th hour." What did you say, young man? "I said, I had not come to my 11th hour yet." What did you say? *Will you repeat that sentence?* No, you dare not, for you do not know when your 11th hour may be. Does any man know which will be his 11th hour? Do any of you know how many more days you may have to live? I do not and nor do you. Do any of my friends conceive that the time of his death is a long way off? No, Beloved, there is such a thing as death in the Chapel pew! The angel of death may be, this moment, coming in at that door and flapping his black wings across this place to find someone who is marked for destruction—and before you shall have entered your house, your soul may have departed and you may have gone from this stage of existence!

Consider then, I say, for you are all, if you are uncalled by Grace, like the man in the 11th hour, standing idle in the marketplace. Consider, if you are ever so young, have you not already given too much time to Satan and the world? I do not like the devil well enough to think that he ought to have the first 20 years of a man's life. Consider, young man—has not Satan had more than enough service from you? Will not the time past of your life suffice you to have worked the will of the Gentiles in serving divers lusts and passions? Do you think it will give you any comfort, on your deathbed, to reflect that you were, for many years, living in sin and not saved early? And do you not know that religion is so sweet that we might well seek it, even for its sweetness, if it were not necessary for our souls security? Ah, you men of the 11th hour, for such you all are—may our Master come to you even at this moment! And if He finds you idle, may He say, "Go you, also, and work in My vineyard"!

I will conclude with just a few words of encouragement to the eldest man and the oldest woman among us. Think not that you are beyond the pale of hope because you are aged. Do not believe Satan when he says to you, "Oh, you are too old a sinner to be saved." Tell him that he is a liar and that he does not know anything about it, for there are none too old to be saved! God will have mercy on all those that come to Him. He takes no objection to youth. He takes no objection to old age. Hear this, you aged sinners! If you are now under a sense of sin, if you are desirous of being saved, there is mercy in the Lord Jesus even for you! And O beloved Friends, one and all of you, are you this night crying out for mercy? Are you desirous of pardon? Do you feel that life is short and death is sure? Do you know that, in a few short days, or months, or years, a few narrow boards shall hold your body and your soul shall have gone from

it into eternity? Do you wish for a Guide across the trackless desert which leads to Heaven or to Hell? Do you desire a Conductor to lead you into Paradise? Do you desire angelic wings to lift you up to the Celestial City? Do you seek for Christ's blood to cleanse you, for God's Grace to sanctify you? Then there is mercy for you! There is mercy for all who feel their need of it and ask the Lord for it! The viler the wretch, the more welcome he is! The worse the character, the more reason he should go to the Lord Jesus! It is Free Grace that we preach—and the vilest, most guilty, oldest, youngest sinner—anybody who feels his need of a Savior is welcome to that Savior now! The Lord give you Grace to seek Him! Remember that the least prayer will be heard, the weakest desire, the feeblest groan will be acknowledged in Heaven—and little as you may think that you shall ever find mercy, you most assuredly shall if you seek it through Christ!

Farewell! Adieu, old man! I know not who you are, but it was laid on my heart to seek you, and I have sought you. O poor old man, you are like one who once lost himself in a pine forest! The snow fell thickly around him. It was dark, damp, cold. The howling of the wolf could be heard by him in the distance and he feared that during the darkness of the night, he would be consumed. There remained but one protection for him and that was that he should light a fire, by which he might warm himself and frighten away the wild beasts. He gathered together the pinewood and the dry, sere leaves, wherever he could find them, and he took out his matchbox. He tried to strike one match, but it was good for nothing. He tried another, and another, and another! Once he thought he had a light and carefully held it in his fingers, seeking to bring it to the little kindling he had laid beneath his pile of wood—but it died out, to his bitter disappointment. For some time he kept on striking his matches. He did so carelessly at first, but, as the number diminished, he struck each one more carefully, till he came to the last two.

He struck the first of the two—he put it under his pinewood—it flamed a moment and then a gust of wind blew it out. And now he came to his last match. The wolf was howling, the wild wind was whistling, the snow was falling, the night was darkening! He feared that he must be there all night without a fire! Already his stiff joints began to freeze. His fingers were well-nigh frozen! You may guess how that man cowered on the earth, to strike, within the circle his frame might make, his last match. You may imagine how earnestly he put up his prayer to God that he might succeed the last time. "O Lord, let this last match succeed," he cried! And anxiously did he look at it time after time, lest it, too, might fail.

So, there is the gray-headed old man—he has his last match in the box. He has struck 69 of them all to no effect and now he has got to the seventieth. O God, if You do not strike the 70th for him, he is lost forever! If You do not give him the light from Heaven, fire from above, he must perish forever!

He strikes that match. On it depends his life—it is his last one—yet he strikes it. Ah, glorious! The flame has caught! It blazes! He sits down and

cheers himself. He is saved! He is saved! God grant that that last match may succeed with you, too, O old man!

God bless you, dear Friends! A happy new year to everyone of you! Many of them to those of you who are bound for Heaven—and a new year in Heaven to those whom God may take away before another year comes round! Adieu!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 20:1-7.

(This Exposition is reprinted from Mr. Spurgeon's last literary work, *The Gospel of the Kingdom.* The Sermon and Exposition combined show the harmony between almost his earliest and his very latest proclamation of the Gospel).

Verses 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.* The Kingdom of Heaven is all of Grace and so is the service connected with it. Let this be remembered in the exposition of this parable. The call to work, the ability and the reward—are all on the principle of Grace and not upon that of merit. This was no common man that is an householder—and his going out to hire laborers into his vineyard was not after the usual manner of men—for they will have a full day's work for a full day's wage. This householder considered the laborers rather than himself. He was up before the dew was gone from the grass and found laborers and sent them into the vineyard. It was a choice privilege to be allowed to begin holy service so early in the morning. They agreed with the householder and went to work on his terms. They might well be content, since they were promised a full day's hire and were sure to get it. A penny a day represented the usual and accepted wage. The householder and the laborers agreed upon the amount—this is the point which has to be noted further on. Young Believers have a blessed prospect—they may well be happy to do good work, in a good place, for a good Master, and on good terms.

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.* Hating indolence, and grieving that he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, he hired more workers about the third hour. They would work only three-quarters of a day, but it was for their good to cease from loafing at the street corner. These are like persons whose childhood is past, but who are not yet old. They are favored to have a good part of their day of life available for hallowed service. To these, the good householder said, "Go you, also, into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you." He pointed to those already in the field and said, "Go you, also," and he promised them not a definite sum, as he did those whom he first hired, but he said, "Whatever is right I will give you." They went their way to their labor, for they did not wish to remain idlers and, as right-minded men, they could not quarrel with the householder's agreement to give

them whatever was right. Oh, that those around us, who are in their rising manhood, would at once take up their tools and begin to serve the great Lord!

5. *Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.* Had it been altogether and alone a business transaction, the householder would have waited to begin a new day and would not have given a whole day's wage for a fraction of a day's work. The entire matter was alone of Divine Grace and, therefore, when half the day was gone, about the sixth hour, he called in laborers. Men of forty and fifty are bid to enter the vineyard. Yes, and about the ninth hour, men were engaged. At sixty, the Lord calls a number by His Grace! It is wrong to assert that men are not saved after forty—we know to the contrary and could mention instances. God, in the greatness of His love, calls into His service men from whom the exuberance of useful vigor has departed—He accepts the waning hours of their day. He has work for the weak as well as for the strong. He allows none to labor for Him without the reward of Grace, even though they have spent their best days in sin. This is no encouragement to procrastination, but it should induce old sinners to seek the Lord at once.

6, 7. *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.* The day was nearly over—only a single hour remained—yet about the 11th hour he went out. The generous householder was willing to take on more workmen and give them hire, though the sun was going down. He found a group lingering at the loafers' corner—standing idle. He wished to clear the whole town of sluggards, so he said to them, "Why stand you here all the day idle?" His question to them may be read by making each word in its turn emphatic—then it yields a fullness of meaning. *Why* are you idle? What is the good of it? Why stand you *here* idle where all are busy? Why *all the day* idle? Will not a shorter space suffice? Why are you idle? You have need to work, you are able to do it and you should set about it at once. Why is any one of us remaining idle towards God? Has nothing yet had power to engage us in sacred service? Can we dare to say, "No man has hired us"? Nearly 70 years of age and yet unsaved? Let us bestir ourselves. It is time that we went, without delay, to till the weeds, prune the vines—do *something* for our Lord in His vineyard! What but rich Grace could lead Him to take on the eleven o'clock lingerers? Yet He invites them as earnestly as those who came in the morning and He will as surely give them their reward!

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